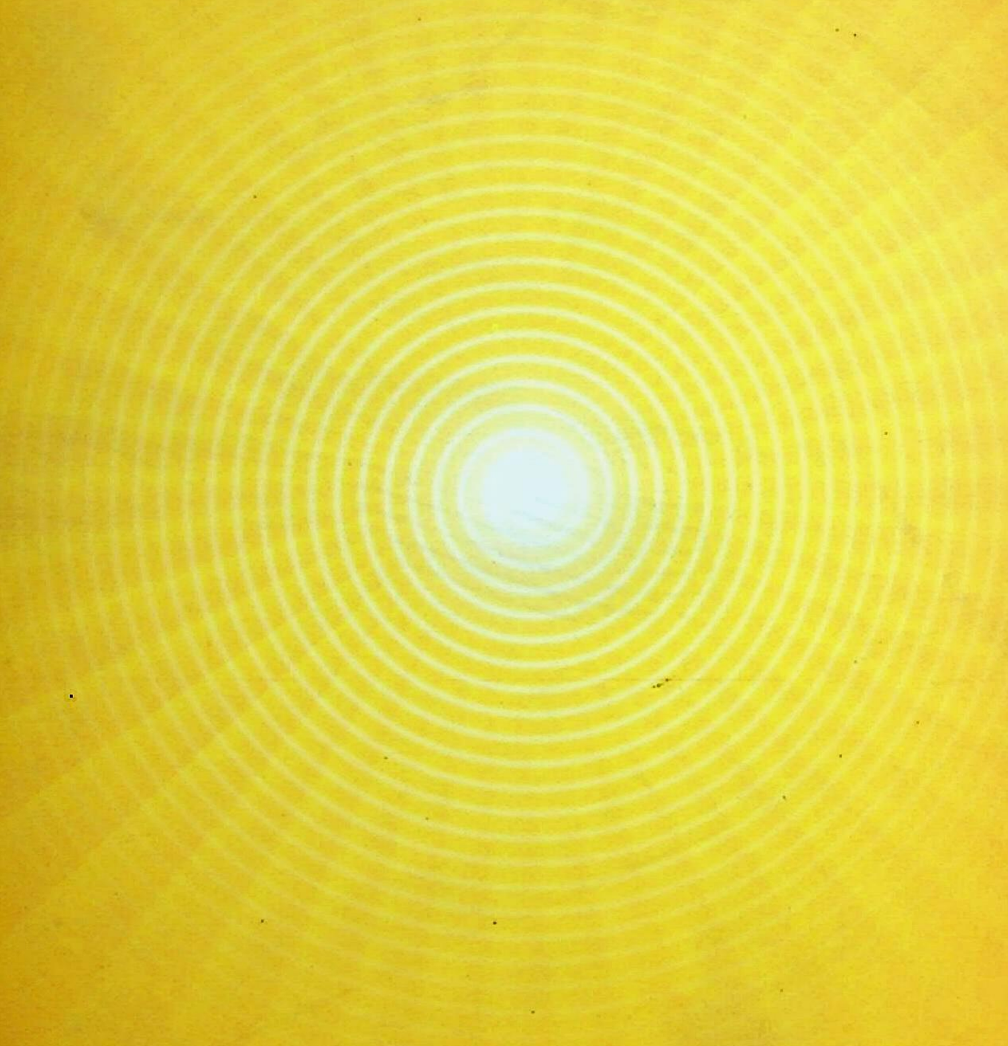
AVADHOOT OF ARBUDACHAL

Biography of Vimala Thakar



Kaiser Irani

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Vimala Thakar

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A Biography of Vimala Thakar

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Preface

In India and maybe in the Western countries also, the hallmark of an enlightened person is his/her life. In India the two are not considered separate – the Life and the Teachings go together. The Teachings have to be authenticated by the life. And normally the life is an open book for all to see, with nothing hidden from anyone. And the sophisticated Indian mind will not tolerate or condone or accept the teachings of a person, in which there is a dichotomy between the two. For since time immemorial they have been taught, and have read how enlightenment expresses itself in action. Right from the story of Lord Ram to the reply given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna's question on what are the indications of an enlightened being, how does he walk, how does he talk? Enlightenment is considered a dimension of consciousness, where there are no inconsistencies in behavior

When we study philosophy and metaphysics, it is often difficult to tell which comes first, the Teachings and then the life of harmony with them, or the Life and living from which the Teachings flow. If we look closely at Vimalaji's life, we find it is really the life and living which comes first. Vimalaji's

Teachings are a confirmation of the life lived, and it is the actual living wrought out individually, in the crucible of experience, that have been presented. Nothing is spoken, which is not actually lived, even the descriptions of the ultimate spiritual expressions of Samadhi are from actual experience.

Further, we will see that most of Vimalaji's life was spent in service. Right from childhood, Vimalaji had the inclination to share her understanding, at the age of 12 Vimalaji started the Vivekananda Study Center to share with her friends in the neighborhood the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, then after college she joined the Bhoodan Movement and worked for 10 years in Land Gift Movement, after that she started traveling in India and abroad giving talks and holding camps on the mutation of mind and transformation of consciousness, and still later camps for social workers and youth.

Vimalaji's whole life has been a contribution to raising the level of consciousness of humanity. The contributions have been in various fields of life; in fact they have touched all the facets of life and have touched the hearts and lives of people in most countries of the world. Vimalaji's life and teachings have helped enquirers and contributed in clarity of understanding in the field of spirituality, they have helped women and given them courage to live independently with self respect, they have benefited all the poor and down trodden villagers of India who Vimalaji worked for, and helped improve their lot through all the social action undertaken and then later on in life, through the guidance given to other social activists, who would come to attend the camps or to meet individually.

As Vimalaji's life unfolds, we will see the work Vimalaji has done to raise the level of consciousness of humanity, firstly by her own life experiments and living, and then;

By her work with spiritual enquirers, women, and social activists world-wide.

By her revolutionary way of working and inter-acting with others, showing a new dynamics of human relationships .

By her articles, talks and yatras in India which provided a unique vigilance over Asia and India in particular.

By her talks on the Upanishads, on Patanjali's Raja Yoga, on Buddhism, on Jainism, on the teachings of the Gita and on the commentaries on the Gita by Sant Gyaneshwar. These talks provided a modern approach to the ancient teachings, thus upholding the flame of ancient Indian culture.

Vimalaji rarely speaks about her life, however just once due to the loving insistence of her colleagues and co-workers of the Bhoodan days, Vimalaji accepted their request to talk about her life and responded to all the questions put to her, from this we have got a cameo glimpse of Vimalaji's life in her own words and have shared it, wherever possible, with the readers.

A special note of appreciation and gratitude to Dr.Barbara Pennington, who has helped throughout in every way.

So we humbly make an attempt to show, the different notes that were sounded in Vimalaji's life, the peak that was reached, the chords they touched and how altogether they formed one beautiful harmonious symphony, taking with them, the evolution one step further, vibrating in harmony with the Cosmic symphony.

Kaiser Irani

May 2004
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Chapter One

The Spiritual Heritage

The Light Emerges

Vimalaji provides
a radiant example of flowering of passion
for spiritual awakening
in early life,
transforming the usual events and relationships of childhood
into the foundation for a spiritual journey

Sing With Me

Love enters the human heart
as does the morning dew
descend upon the Mother Earth.

Love invades the human heart
as does the spring of youth
tinkle every drop of blood.

Since love has visited me,
solitude reigns over my life.
Ceaseless events pass through me
without leaving scars of memory.
Joy and sorrow play endlessly
without touching the inner core.

The purity of serene harmony
sings soundlessly through silence.
The music of silent ecstasy
throbs noiselessly within me.

Would any one care to listen?
Would any one come, and sing with me?
... *Vimala*

Chapter One

The Spiritual Heritage

The Light Emerges

INTRODUCTION

Vimalaji is a revolutionary in her approach to spirituality and has been from early childhood. She experimented on her own to discover spiritual truths, without taking the easy way of following a guru or authority of any scriptures and traditions. Though she met great beings and learned much from them, being always receptive, she did not get attached to any one

From childhood Vimalaji lived her understanding without any time lag. This approach was one of the pillars of Vimalaji's teachings in later life. She could say from living experience: "I feel that understanding is for living. If you understand the truth and do not live it, you are committing a crime against life."

In all the challenges, the many ups and down of an eventful life, whether in her relationship with her mother, her *brothers, or the numerous illnesses and accidents that she went through, Vimalaji maintained the attitude of an enquirer. As an inquirer, she didn't become attached to her family or even to her body.*

Inheritance

To understand Vimalaji's life we will begin with heredity of her biological family. An enquirer may question whether enlightened beings have an advantage over other enquirers, because of special spiritual inheritance. In Vimalaji's life, even though she had a rich inheritance, and learned a great deal from her grandfather and father, she had to face many challenges in living her understanding. She had to face expectation from her family to live and behave as others do and as accepted by society. Vimalaji stood her ground alone, in spite of all odds, and faced all the consequences of living her convictions. Her life has never been easy, yet Vimalaji has not compromised her understanding. She has struggled like every other enquirer but has remained steadfast in her faith in the Divine and the divinity residing in every human being.

Maternal Grandfather

Vimalaji remembers with great joy and fondness childhood days spent with her grandfather at his home in

Chatisgadh (in the state of Madhya Pradesh). Many incidents of her grandfather's life made a deep and lasting impression on her consciousness.

My mother's father, Yadavrao Bhagdikar, who was a great devotee, a great intellectual, was born on Ramnavmi (The birth day of Lord Rama , considered as an auspicious day) and left the body on Ramnavmi. He told family members he would be leaving on that day.

My grandfather had his mala constantly in his pocket and kept the jaap of the Lord's name, Ram Ram, going continuously. Day and night he would repeat Ram Ram. His jaap was so powerful that if you stood near his bed, when he slept, you could hear the name, Ram Ram, on his breath.

My grandfather would get up at three o'clock each morning. After bathing he would sit in puja by four a.m. He was a devotee of Shri Ramchandra and had a four-foot statue of Ramjee. For three hours he would do puja of Ramjee, do jaap and sit in meditation.

I have seen the effect of what people call *Naam Smaran* in grandfather's life. I have seen him sitting in Puja and doing jaap. From his chest - *Vaksha Sthal,* small *padukas* would arise as if tiny bare feet had fallen there. After five minutes of starting jaap, the mudra would come up, and as long as his jaap would continue, the mudra would be there as if raised. When he finished his jaap, they would again subside or sink back. I would sit for hours and watch this and listen as he recited the Tulsi Ramayan and Gyaneshwari. He was a great devotee and a great intellectual.

He was six-feet tall and had a fair complexion. He used to wear Pune style Tilak Pagree (turbin), and special shoes of Pune which went chag chag. He wore a chabba of kosa silk, a silk well known all over India and available in that area. He also wore a dhoti and carried a shawl. He had a chandan like the Vaishnavs on his large forehead. He kept a silver-topped stick. He moved around in a horse drawn carriage.

After morning puja, my grandfather would come downstairs to visit the temple in his palace He would sit on the steps and partake of the milk offered to the deity in the temple. After drinking the milk, he would end his silence of 12 hours from 8 in the evening until 8 in the morning. He would sit on the steps outside the temple and ask his manager, his accountant, his wife, if they had anything to say, anything to ask, and only then he would talk to them. If there was anything to communicate regarding work, he would speak; otherwise he would be quiet. He never chatted needlessly.

My grandfather had deep relationships with Saints. He was acquainted with Swami Vivekananda. He was a devotee of Sherdi Sai Baba. He used to go to Sherdi occasionally. In the summers he used to go and stay in Devlali, so he could go to Sherdi. He was a friend of the blind saint Gulabrao Maharaj, who was a devotee of Gyaneshwar Maharaj, he wrote in Marathi on Gyaneshwar and Gyaneshwari, had taken Katyan vrat and was known as Gyaneshwar Taniya. He often came to meet grandfather to Bilaspur, where I was born. Grandfather's younger brother belonged to Radha Swami Panth; because of that, members of Radha Swami Panth from Agra – Dayal Bagh, from Varanasi, from Punjab kept coming. Muslim Fakirs and the followers of Baul would come.

The fourth floor in his palace was reserved for Saints. When a Saint came to visit Grandfather, I would climb into the lap of the Saint and listen to all the stories. Every week at least one group of Saints would visit. Whenever he encountered Saints, he would bring them home. In the evening after 8.00 p.m., he would go upstairs, sit with the Saints and after 11 p.m. retire to his room.

Grandfather lived a simple life. He ate very simple meals. He typically ate mung dhal, two chapattis, one vegetable and a little rice. That was his meal. My grandmother used to say, "There is so much wealth and yet this man doesn't eat anything." His consciousness was not attached to any of these things. In the evening he would have two mung papads and about a litre of cow's milk. Whether the occasion was a festival or a marriage, I never say grandfather eat more than this. If any sweetmeats came into the house he would taste a bit. He would say, "This body is not for eating; this life is not for eating."

Grandfather never called anyone by name, but always would address the person as *Ram pyare* (Oh, beloved of Lord Ram) if it were a male and *Ram pyaree,* if it were a female. No matter who it was, everyone was addressed this way. If his wife or his servants were present he would call each of them, *Ram Pyaree, Ram Payare.*

My grandfather's palace was large with fifty servants whose quarters were on the premises of the palace. He had a school for their children and his own children studied there.

I never saw grandfather angry. When I was six or seven, I came with my family to grandfather's house for the marriage of my younger aunt. There was a robbery on that occasion. Nanaji was in puja at 3.30 a.m. and my uncle was knocking at the door. I was with him, because whenever we came to Raipur I stayed with him. He liked to keep me with him whenever he could. When I heard my uncle knocking, I tried to alert Nanaji by shaking him, , but he never heard me. His body was like a stick when he was in Dhyan. No matter how much I would shake him or climb on his back, he was not aware of it. He got up at his usual time and lifted me up in his arms and went downstairs.

When he went downstairs, the whole family was gathered outside the temple. He went there and asked them what happened. He used to speak in Hindi though he knew Marathi. They told him about the robbery. “O.K. nobody was beaten?” “No” “Nobody beat the robbers?” “No” “You didn’t report it to the police did you?” “Yes we did”. "Oh, oh, why did you do that? We have so much wealth here that is why the robbers wish to break in here”. Then he asked his sons: “If anyone asks you to go in the night with a mask on your face to commit burglary, would you go? Go and take back the report. God gave with one hand and has taken back with the other."

I can never forget that conversation. I understood then in childhood, that *parigragh* or amassing of possessions is the cause of theft. It was only later on in life that I was to read the philosophy of socialism and was in contact with Jai Prakash Narayan and Vinobaji. Collection gives incentive to others to rob. I thought at that time, we will have to find a way out of this; when we grow up, we will have to search for a way out.

When I was twelve years old, grandfather left his body. Six months before that he came to Akola and spoke to my father. He used to call my father Bapu. "Bapu, Ramji has given me leave and this year at Ramnavmi I will leave. I have brought this Gyaneshwari granth for Vimala; and my silver milk glass and my jaap mala are for Vimala. He had brought five books: his Gyaneshwari granth, Tulsi Ramayana granth, Vinayak Patrika and two others.

Every year grandfather would celebrate Ramnavmi (birthday of Lord Ram, grandfather's birthday and my birthday according to the Hindu calender) at his home in Raipur. The celebrations would begin from Chaitra Shuddha Pratipa. People would come from all over India. There would be continuous non-stop kirtan and recitation of Ramayana.

The year of my twelfth birthday, Grandfather called many more people to the celebration. On the day of Ramnavmi after noon, after the bhog or offering in the temple, he began to serve everyone, giving a coconut and

Rs. 11 to every Brahman. He met everyone in this way, and then went into the temple and took some Prasad from the thali that was offered to the Lord. He ate the prasad, washed his hands, sat down in Asana and left the body.

My grandmother had not believed him when he had said he would be leaving on Ramnavmi. When even after some time, the door of the temple remained closed, she asked her son to investigate fearing that grandfather may have left them after all.

I did not know nor understand why everyone was saying grandfather has left. I wondered why everyone was saying grandfather has left, that he has gone? Where has he gone? What has happened? Somebody told me that he has died. I went inside (to the temple) and saw how beautiful he looked, sitting there on his asana. And I said: "Is this death? Is this how death happens? I too will die that way." Grandmother was standing there and she heard me and gave me a good slap. My uncle caught me and took me outside.

There was sense of belonging to grandfather's life. He had an extremely sweet, mild, sober, bright personality. Grandfather had immense devotion and was a great personality. He left a great impression on my consciousness.

Father

My father, Balwant Thakar. was from Pune in Maharashtra state. His family came from a village called

Kokhari Gunde. They were Rig Vedic Brahmans of Kashap Gotra. Because they had helped Chatarpati Shivaji, the small village was gifted to them by Shivaji and the Thakar Parivar were made the officiating priests of the Ganapati Mandir in Pune city, in Kaswa Peth.

When father was just twelve months old, there was a plague in Pune. Both his parents died in the plague, so his uncle took his nephew with him to Indore where he was living. The aunt did not like at all the idea of having this addition to the family. When the boy was scarcely five-years old, he was made to do all the chores of the house, cleaning, sweeping, washing dishes, helping in the cooking etc. He would do all that and go to school. He was a clever student and first in his class.

My father told me that never in all those years did he hear one kind word or any expression of love. When he finished his matriculation exam, he heard that his aunt wanted to marry him off to her sister's blind daughter, and so he ran away to Ajmer in Rajasthan.

In Ajmer he stayed at an institute for orphans and went to Mayo College. There he made friends with Haribhau Upadhaya (who later on became the Chief Minister of the state), and with the principal of the college, Tostoveen Sahib, who later became his adopted father.

The principal of Mayo College, Mr.Tostoveen, came from Scotland. He was a very good man. He gave father a job in the library, sweeping, dusting, putting the books in order and in exchange made arrangement for him to study and stay in the hostel. He didn't attend classes. When the terminal exams came, he asked if he could sit for the exam. The principal said: "But you haven't attended any classes." My father replied: "I have read the notes of the boys".

When he appeared for the exam, he came first. Tostoveen Sahib said to him: "Now you come and stay in an outbuilding of my bungalow and enrol as a regular student. I will arrange for all your boarding and lodging." He became very fond of my father. Father never went outside; he would do Surya Namaskar (Yogic exercise) in the morning and the rest of the day was only interested in his books and study. Tostoveen Sahib observed how fond of studying he was and with what concentration he did his work. He said to him: "Look why don't you adopt me as your father and I will adopt you as my son. Then you will not live in the outbuilding; you will live in my own house." Father noted that Tostoveen Sahib began wearing dhoti, chabba and once said: "For the last three years I have prepared to become a vegetarian for you." He had great affection for father. If I remember there being a grandfather from father's side it is Tostoveen Sahib.

Father continued his studies and came first in his classes. While in college he mastered Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, and English. He got his B.A. from Mayo College. He received a scholarship for higher studies and Tostoveen Sahib suggested he go to Allahabad to do his M.A. and Law degree. In the six years of college, Bapu Sahib (that is how he was often lovingly referred to) studied the Upanishads, the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islam, Christian religions, the philosophy of Charvad and books by Swami Ram Tirth.

After father completed his M.A. and L.L.B he went away to Uttar Kashi in the Himalayas and lived there for two years with the intention of studying all the religions of the land. He felt he should know something about Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, for one day if he was to become a father, then he should be in a position to explain the essence of all religions to his children. If they are to become citizens of India they must have a general idea of the philosophy of all the religions. He had a good grasp of the Upanishads and was very fond of the works of Swami Ram Tirth.

Father was a rationalist and was the Secretary of the Rationalist Association of India. He was a great intellectual. My grandfather knew seven to eight languages; my father knew five to six languages.

After father received his Law Degree, a friend suggested that he go back to Vidharbha in Maharashtra, a good place to easily begin his practice. He went to Nagpur with his small trunk of books, cooking utensils and clothes and rented a room for Rs.2.00 in Sitabandi.

As destiny would have it, the first case he fought, was against the lawyer, Yadavrao Bhagdikar Yadavrao Bhagdikar, was a renowned lawyer of Raipur and had come to Nagpur to fight the case. He was so impressed with the 24 year-old youth who defeated him, that he thought "I will marry my daughter to Balwant Thakar".

Mother

My mother Chandrika, had an inborn intelligence, an intuitive perception. Although she was not highly educated, she was sharper than my father in many ways. She had a good grasp on the ways of society and how to behave according to social norms and customs..

Mother had an extremely generous nature. She had no demands to make of my father. She enjoyed life to the fullest; she was an aesthetic person who was fond of music, liked to cook good food and eat good food. She was very fond of people. She often told my father "What is this sitting alone all the time, not talking to anyone". If anyone came home, father would speak a few words and then go into his room. Father was not a social man; he loved solitude and ma loved to meet with people.

If mother had a weakness, it was her obsession with hospitality. Whenever people came, even if they came at midnight, she would feed them. My mother loved to feed others - whether it was making an offering to the fire during puja, or feeding the cow or feeding the varkari boys who came for a meal or feeding guests.

The entire neighbourhood depended on my mother. If anyone was ill, or if someone was delivering a baby, she would be called. She knew a lot of medicines.. She had no fear and no false mannerisms. She was very robust though she had a temper.

Grandfather had a strong effect on Ma. She had statues for puja and used to do the puja of Bal (Ladoo) Gopal and Ganeshji and Devis.

Parent's Marriage

Yadavrao Bhagdikar, my grandfather, was a jagidar (landlord) of 36 villages and lived in a five-storied house or rather palace with fifty servants. After the legal defeat by Balwant Thakar, called Bapu Sahib, he went with this young man to see where he lived and to learn something about his background. Even after seeing the simple lifestyle of this budding young lawyer, Bapu Sahib (as he was lovingly called), did not change his mind, but invited him to his home in Raipur.

On returning home to Raipur, Yadavrao spoke to his family about a boy he had seen for his daughter Chandrika. When the family learned the boy was an orphan, they opposed the idea, saying you are giving your daughter to someone who has nothing. Grandfather stood his ground and invited the young lawyer to Raipur.

Bapu Sahib, my father, came to Raipur. He was shocked when he saw all the affluence. He said to Yadavrao "I do not consider earning money as the purpose of my life. In life I have some values. You are a very rich man; why do you want to give your daughter to me in marriage?" Yadavrao replied: "I am not marrying my daughter to money or to buildings but to a human being." Bapu Sahib replied "If that is your wish, it is all right with me. But even if we get married now, it will take me at least two years to earn some money, then only will I be able to take your daughter with me". Grandfather, Nanaji, requested that he come to Raipur and do his practice there, but he did not think it proper to stay with his in-laws. He wondered how a person dedicated to the truth, could become a wealthy man in this society.

So my parents were married. On my father's side, the only one who came to the marriage was Bapu Sahib's adopted father, Tostoveen Sahib. He wore the traditional Indian dress of dhoti for the marriage ceremony and since he considered Bapu Sahib as his son he even changed his lifestyle and had became a vegetarian.

After my parents were married, my father returned to his home in Nagpur, with the wish to make enough money, before asking his young bride to join him. He wanted to keep her in some comfort. Two years passed but Bapu Sahib never came to take his bride back with him. People began to talk. They teased Chandrika saying, "Your husband will never come to take you home." Tired of these taunts, Ma said to her father: "I am going to the one you have married me to".

One day my Ma said to her brother, "You take me to Nagpur." They went to Nagpur, and found the rooms where my father was staying. Ma told father she was ready to live the way he did. "I will live in the same conditions you are living in, and will not be of any hindrance to you." She was ready to put up with any inconvenience. My father asked her to return home for awhile, and said that he would come fetch her soon. She replied, "I have not come to return home." Such was my bright mother. I am the daughter of such an obstinate mother. In that age, in 1920, to be so brave and courageous was a rare thing.

Ma told father, “I don’t want anything from you except that in our home no money should come from an unethical and non-religious source. Do not take any criminal cases, only do civil practice." Father replied, “But there is not much income in that”. Mother insisted: “It does not matter. If income comes into the house earned by falsehoods and lies, how will I teach the children to be honest and truthful? I should be able to say with pride that in our house no income comes from unethical means or in a non-religious way. I want to keep my head high and tell our children to speak the truth, live the truth.” Father agreed. "It will be so”. Father told me later, “What woman would make this request of her husband on the first night after marriage – that is how your mother is."

About five months later, Bapu Sahib won a case against a famous advocate Shri Rajwada of Vidarbha. He recognised the potential in Bapu Sahib and said to him “Come with me to Akola; it is a small city and you can take the leadership there.” Dada Sahib (as he was called by the family) and his wife took my parents with them to Akola and made all arrangements for them, from renting a bungalow to setting up a kitchen. They considered Chandrika as their daughter. In Akola there was a leader in the community called Brijlal Biyani. He also noticed Bapu Sahib and befriended him. In this way Bapu Sahib began an independent life in Akola.

Before the birth of their first child the Brahmans boycotted father and threw him out of the community. He had a Harijan client and had gone with the client for Satya Narayan Prasad, so the Brahmans had done *jaati bhishkar*. The Brahmans would not come to our house nor did they invite any of us for food.

My father performed the traditional thread ceremony for my brothers himself, as no priest was willing to come to perform it. My mother wanted to go through with the ceremony, even though a priest would not come. She said: "We are Rig Vedic Brahmans (the highest caste of Brahmans) and they must have this this culture." Even the marriage ceremony of my brothers was not performed by priests in the Vedic way but had to be a registered one.

Vimalaji's Birth

When Ashtami had passed, when midnight passed and Ramnavmi had begun, in the early hours of the dawn (prabhat) Vimalaji's birth took place. It was according to the Hindu calendar on the birthday of Lord Ram in the month of Chaitra. According to the Western calendar it was on 15th April, 1925. Vimalaji recalls how her grandfather had a vision before the birth that a special soul was to be born to his daughter.

When mother was five-months pregnant with me, Nanaji (grandfather) had a vision that the being that is going to be born this time to your daughter does not belong to your family. He told my mother, "The being coming to you is not yours; it belongs to saints and it is coming for saintly work." This is what I have heard from my mother and my grandmother.

Grandfather went to Akola, spoke with father and brought his daughter, Chandrika, to Raipur. When he brought my mother to Raipur, he began to recite Tulsi Ramayana to her every day. It was his favourite book. He had a very sweet voice. In the morning he read Gyaneshwari and in the evening Tulsi Ramayana. In the days after my birth, he would sit outside the room and recite the Ramayana. According to the custom then, nobody was allowed in the mother's room for ten days after birth. On the eleventh day he took me in his lap, and from then onwards whenever he sat in puja or recited Ramayana or sat in dhyan, he took me in his lap. I heard Ram Charitra Manas from his voice, heard Vinaya Patrika from his voice. Thus the effect of his personality was on my consciousness. I remember this cultural inheritance.

Sweet Memories of Childhood

Grandfather was very fond of me. He gave me the name Durga. I saw Grandfather sitting in Dhyan, doing puja. I remember from the age of two or three, when Grandfather sat in dhyan early in the morning, I sat by him and observed him in dhyan. In the room for his puja, there was a four-foot marble statue of Ramjee. My attention would not be drawn towards the statue but was centered on Nanaji. He used to sing very beautifully. He knew by heart Vinay Patrika, Tulsi Ramanayana and Ram Charita Manas.

I have a sweet impression of Grandfather's life, and the image was imprinted on my consciousness. The sweet expression of his life made an indelible impression on me. Important hereditary aspects I received from grandfather and others from father. Father, before he was married, had been to the Himalayas. So there must be some effect of this hereditary. The basic principles of father's life were truthfulness and ahimsa or non-violence. The essence of his life was truth. I never saw father speak untruth, never saw him take criminal cases because untruth was involved there. He led a very simple life.

So you can see that if there is any essence of devotion in me, it is hereditary. I received initiation into truth and hard work from my father and devotion to the Lord from my grandfather.

I am not saying that heredity explains everything otherwise the spiritual heritage should be in my brothers too, but it was not in them. I have five brothers; they don't have this. They are very good people but they are not drawn toward Dharma, love of spirituality.

At a young age I had a lot of self-confidence and brightness. I had the lustre of youth, the light of Atman. I received from my father and grandfather the art of expression. The love of language I picked up in childhood.

The wish to obtain God realisation and then to share it with others was there from early childhood: An awareness was present from five-years old that there was nothing more beloved than attaining God realisation, experiencing the Divine, and sharing it with all. At that age, I had not the words to express myself, that this is my mission; this is my life's work. I feel that my birth is for this.

Experiments in Childhood

Vimalaji's spiritual search began very early in life. When she was barely five- years old, she recalls asking: "Where is God? Where can I find Him?" Vimalaji describes it as an obsession. The whole of Vimalaji's childhood was dominated by this one obsession: to find out where God is, who He is, how to meet Him. Vimalaji describes the different incidents of childhood related to this quest.

When I was in Akola, I had only one question constantly reverberating in the chitta: Where is God? They speak about Bhagwan, Ishwara, where is He? I cannot say that there was any incident that brought this about. But as I said the first remembrance I have of this obsession was when I was five-years old.

When I was a young child, I asked, "Where is God?" and someone replied, "God is in the well." So I jumped into the well. It was one hundred feet deep, and I remember my mother telling me that it was with great difficulty that they pulled me out.

I was not interested in school studies; I was not interested in society or in playing and running around as the other children of my age did. There was only one question which stayed with me night and day "Where is God? When will I see Him?"

I refer to it today, at a mature age, but then though my consciousness was in the body of the child of five years, it did not feel like the consciousness of a five-year old. I would say, "This is ageless." Even today I say to those staying with me, that when I sit on the *Asana* to give a talk, I have no age. An ageless consciousness clothed in flesh and bone is sitting there. And at other times, I treat everyone with honor, respect, and humility to everyone, then my behavior takes into consideration the fact that I am born in a woman's body and have a particular age. Once I sit on the *Asana* I am ageless.

From the age of five, I felt a difference between the body and my inner understanding, my inner intelligence. (Now I use the word Intelligence; then I used to say understanding.) I used to tell Ma, "My understanding is not that of a five-year old". Ma replied: "Why do you say that?" I announced: "I am a Sanyasi."

When there were holidays and my brothers were out, I'd lock my room, and on the floor I'd draw a map of India in chalk. I would find a copper water pot in the house of Nanaji (grandfather). I'd tie a string around the lota, and make it into a kamandal (water pot carried by Sanyasis) and I'd carry a lathi - a stick. I had long hair, so I tied it on top of my head with a handkerchief, (like the sadhus do). On the map of India, I would write the names of as many pilgrim spots as I could remember. I'd write the names and visit them on the map.

I'd write the name of Rameshwaram, and then would go to Rameshwaram and say *"Namah Shivaya,"* or go to Badrinath and say *"Shri Krishna Govinda Murali"*. This way I'd visit Kanyakumari, Kashi, Dwarka Jaganathpuri, and other pilgrim spots. It was a game.

I played this game until I was in the tenth or eleventh standard. I did not need to play with anyone else. I felt as if I were actually reaching these pilgrim spots. I would draw a picture of the Himalayas, and an intoxication filled me. I felt intoxicated when I visited the different places. My brothers observed this and told my mother these signs are not good.

I would take a towel and tie it around my head and say: "I am a Sanyasi." Ma would say to me, "Why do you talk like that? Can a girl ever become a Sanyasi?" And I replied, "To you I look like a seven-year old girl, but I'm not really a seven-year old girl."

My family thought that this was a kind of madness and even they used to say at home. In the house my mother, grandmother, aunts, uncles were concerned, "Why does she speak like this?"

Childhood Incidents

Goswami Tulsidas

Vimalaji narrates an incident that she remembers from her grandfather's life that shows how she was exposed at a young age to observing a life of devotion and faith, and the effects of it.

When I was five years old and visiting in Raipur, my grandfather and I were on the large veranda outside his room. Grandfather was seated in an easy chair and I was in his lap, listening to talk of Saints. Suddenly a Sadhu Maharaj came climbing up the stairs. The whole stairway was marble and we could hear the noise of wooden sandals –chap-chap- as he came up the stairs. Immediately grandfather stood up, took me from his lap, put me outside the room and closed the door. The doors were made half in wood and half in glass; the bottom half was wooden. So I took a chair, climbed on top of it, and peeped through the glass to see who this person was.

I saw from the window that my grandfather had seated the person in his chair and he was seated on the floor, with the feet of that person in his lap. They were talking with each other although I could not hear what they were saying. I saw grandfather crying and the person putting his hand on grandfather's head.

When I grew up and started reading and writing I recognised that man, it was Goswami Tulsidasji (Author of the Epic Ramayana.) My grandfather used to say that my guru is Goswami Tulsidasji and until he comes and gives me a mantra, I will continue with Ram Naam jaap. I had direct perception of Goswami Tulsidasji at the age of five. This sight, this memory is as vivid and clear to me today, as seeing you in front of me.

Searching in the Jungle

When I was six, I ran away from home with a friend to the jungle in search of God. We walked six or seven miles. Our bungalow was outside of the city limits, and if you continued on the road beyond the railway line, there was the jungle. Somebody told me that God was found in the jungle, so I went into the jungle.

I tied some channa and peanuts in a handkerchief, put the handkerchief in my frock pocket and left home with my friend. We walked for miles. I thought God must be like other human beings and I will meet Him After walking for about six miles, I called out: "Where are you God? Come out; we have come to meet you. Why are you not coming out? Come God. When someone comes to our house, mother comes out. Why are you not coming, why are you not coming?" I continued walking and calling to God.

The day passed the snacks of channa and peanuts that we had taken with us were finished. Then we saw that father's friend, our neighbour Vakil Sahib, was driving toward us in his car. His daughter was my friend who was with me. When my friend saw the car, she ran and got inside the car. I started running away.

Uncle stepped out of the car and asked: "Where are you going?" I said: "Take your daughter with you and go. I am not coming. I have left home in search of God." "Ok, your father is not in Akola?" Father had gone to Nagpur for a high court case. "So you have run away?" "I don't know; I have come to meet God". He gave me a few slaps, and tried to pick me up.

I bit him and the marks of that bite stayed on his hand all his life. I told him, "I am not your daughter. I want to search for God. Let me go, let me go to God." He said, "I'm taking you home". I cried and cried.

Home Atmosphere Like An Ashram

Vimalaji has said though she never joined an Ashram, her childhood upbringing was very much like Ashram life. The way her father brought them up and taught them, had an Ashram-like discipline and culture.

Much of Vimalaji's thoughts and teachings came from a foundation of heredity and the family life she lived. Nothing was from the study of books or abstract philosophy, but everything was from experiences.

Mother and father got up at 5.30 in the morning. They would sit together at the hand flourmill to grind the wheat. We children got up at 6.00 and after a wash, our parents would take us up to the terrace and we would all, including mother and father do Surya Namaskar daily.

After that we were given milk to drink. Then it was our turn to sit for fifteen minutes at a time at the flour mill and grind the wheat. On some Saturdays and Sundays we would even have to do the grinding for one hour at a time.

As father was born in Kashyap Gotre lineage) and was a Rigvedi Deshassta Brahmin in Thakar family, he was not permitted to eat outside. As Brahmins did not eat outside, whatever the children wanted was made at home. Polishing rice, grinding wheat, pulling water from the well was done by the family.

Our morning meal was at 10.30. Evening meal was at 7.30 P.M. Mother would be free by then. Father used to eat at 10.00 and in the evening at 7.00.

Our evening meal was at 7.00 P.M. and by 8.00 P.M. all work in the kitchen was over. We had to study from 8.00 to 9.00 P.M. and at 9.00 P.M. father would sit with us. Sometimes he would talk to us about Buddha, about Mahavir, about Jesus or saints like Kabir, Nanak or whomever he wished to talk about. He used to say: "You will be citizens of India. As many religions as there are in India, you should have a general idea about them."

Every Saturday mother and father fasted. They said it was good for the body. They were very fond of walking, and every Sunday they would go for a walk for about four to five miles.

Family Life

The family atmosphere was very light, very bright. In one way my parents were very strict and in another way they were so full of love. For 24 hours their ears, nose, eyes were focused on us, no matter what we did in the house. We had their full attention all the time.

I did not have a close relationship with my brothers and sister. They talked among themselves, but I was not interested in their talk so I would concentrate on my studies. I was busy with my share of the housework and my studies.

My brothers and sister felt that I was different, odd. They were unanimous in their opinion that this is some strange creature among us; she is a misfit. When I used to come home from school I would take the book *Yoga Vashishta, to* read. I would read books from father's cupboard on Ram Tirth, on Vivekananda. All the parts of Mahabharata, I had read all this by the age of fourteen or fifteen, before I completed Metric. My brothers and sister were not interested in this, and I was not interested in anything else. I used to do the housework and then would sit to read.

We had a large room and all our beds were in that room. In the night when I wanted to do my reading, I used to cover my whole bed with a blanket and keep a lantern under the bed. I would lie there on my stomach and read in the light of the lantern. I did this so that my brothers would not be troubled or disturbed. They used to wonder at this age, "What is she doing? Why is she doing all this? Does she want to become a philosopher? We will see, in time she will get married, and then what? So let her do what she wants now."

They did not like to see me sitting in meditation. They would take a pin and prick me or sometimes burn me with a lighted match, thinking I was pretending. But I wasn't aware of what they were doing. When they would prick me and blood would come, and yet my eyes would not open, they realised this is not acting.

Often I have heard my mother say: "I don't know what world this father and daughter live in, and what century they belong to".

Family Values

Value of Honesty

There was freedom for us to do everything, except to tell lies. If any of my brothers spoke an untruth, my parents would fast for one day. They did not beat us, they did not trouble us, but they just asked: "Why did you feel like doing this?"

I remember once my middle brother, Madhukar, told a lie about attending school. My parents had a rule that if any of the children told a lie, they would not eat. They would not beat us or punish us, but they would punish themselves. Why? "Because if you tell a lie it means we are responsible for your lie. There is something lacking in our way of explaining to you. After that incident none of my brother spoke a lie. That was their way of teaching.

There was no insistence about anything in the family except that we tell the truth. Father could not stand untruth. He used to say: "I feel so pained when any of you tell an untruth. I have such pain, that I cannot explain it to you."

So I received a foundation of truthfulness, a love of truthfulness.

Value of Cooperation

Though my parents were temperamentally different, they had the art of living together. In today's terminology we say they were temperamentally different, but there was a sweet cooperation. I feel I learnt a lot from their life.

Ma liked conveniences, wealth, socialisation and father was fond of solitude. She was fond of doing puja. As Lord Ganapati was the family Diety of Thakar Family, every month she would fast on chaturthi. The Puja required that abhishek be done, and for that father's presence was required to do abhishek. Father used to say: "Mother of Vimal, tell your God I am sitting for the abhishek not for him, but for you." He would wear pitambar and sit with her for about an hour. He would also fast but would say: "Tell your God I'm not doing it for Him, but for you."

Value of Education

Father did not differentiate between educating the girls and boys. If father took the boys to learn swimming, he would also take me. My parents had five boys and two girls (I had a younger sister), but they made no distinction between male and female.

Father would make us do all kinds of exercises; he would take us all, including mother, to the terrace and teach us the exercises.

He trained us all in boating. We learnt it so well, that in 1969, when I was in Yugoslavia, there was an International Boating Competition, which I entered, came first and got a prize. He taught us swimming. He himself would teach us. I have won many prizes in swimming. He would not discriminate between a girl and a boy. All should be treated as equals, even the boys were taught cooking and the girls were taught all the sports along with the brothers.

Father was fond of music and played the tabla well. He was member of music club in Akola. Like Dada, he used to play tabla.

Father had great love for study; he had an addiction, an obsession for teaching. In our house every night three or four poor, orphan students used to come to sleep. After 9.00 p.m., when our homework was done, our textbooks were given to them. In Maharashtra it is called Wakari. They would go to different homes. So from Monday to Friday, five different Wakaris would come to study. They would sit in father's office and study for hours. Father would sit there, while they were studying and do his casework. He would help them by paying their fees. I have no idea how many students he helped in this way. When our clothes became old and worn out, they would be repaired, washed and given to the poor. Textbooks were not to be torn as they would be handed over to the poor students.

Father had no wish to accumulate money. When my father died, he left no bank balance. Both my parents used to say: "Your character, your education is what you will receive as your inheritance – nothing else."

Father sent us to the Guerrilla Military Training Course in Nasik. A friend of father's was an educator and said: "Why not send Vimala to the course." So in my 9th, 10th and 11th standards in the holidays I went for one month to the training course. I learnt horse riding, how to use a twelve-bore gun and how to throw hand grenades. I learnt to ride while standing on a horse, and to ride standing on the horse with the reins held in my mouth. I was able to ride a horse standing backward, facing the tail with the reins in my mouth.

My father sent me to take the course each year for three years, so that I would be ready at any time to protect myself or Atma Raksha - protection of the Atman and if one had to fight and protect the country. One of my brothers ran away from the training course after ten days, because it was a difficult life. My elder brother said I am a Brahmin and refused to go to military training, but I had no objection.

Basic Truths Learnt In Childhood

Learning Respect

Respect for All Communities and Religions

Vimalaji's father was a person who respected all men alike and in spite of knowing the community could excommunicate him for his broadmindedness and mingling with other castes and communities, he did not compromise on his principles. Vimalaji describes such incidents.

My father was a great silent revolutionary. He had no insistence, hypocrisy, temper, or attachment to the body. He lived his understanding and moved on. Maybe living one's understanding is something I learnt from him. If you understand something, then why the delay in living it, in putting it into action? I never did understand that. If you understand something today then why delay, why postpone, why hold back till tomorrow to put it into action?

Father was a man of great revolutionary ideas. He did not believe in religious customs or in caste, class and religious discriminations. His good friend was a Muslim A. Ahmed Chacha. He was a lawyer and our neighbour who visited our home. His wife and children used to come to our house, and on weekends we had to go to his house. We called him Chacha (uncle) and learnt about the Koran from him. His children would come to our house and learn verses of the Gita from my father. There was no separation or difference of Hindu and Muslim.

When we were young, we used to hear stories from the Koran from Ahmed Chacha. When he was dying, he did not call for his relatives but he called for father. He asked father to give him his word that he would help Ahmed Chacha's daughter to marry, and father gave his word. When I was studying for a B.A., he went to Hyderabad for the marriage of the daughter.

Father had Harijan friends, Bori friends, friends from Kutch. He had friends from all castes and religions. We never asked what religion or caste a person is.

The Christian principal from Scotland, Tostoveen Sahib, used to come home, especially after he retired from Ajmer. Our house was an open house where people from all communities were welcome. It was considered an odd house in the neighbourhood.

When my elder brother passed metric and went to study at King Edward College Amravati, Tostoveen Sahib arranged to be transferred from Ajmer to Amravati because his son Bapu Sahib stayed close by. He would come to visit us from 24th December till 1st January, and our Christmas week would commence from his visit. We heard about the life of Jesus from him.

Respect for Women

Vimalaji's father had a great respect for women, unlike most Indian males of that period. He did not differentiate between the sexes but gave equal opportunity to his sons and daughters. There are many incidents of the childhood that Vimalaji describes that shows this.

On Saturday and Sunday my father used to teach my mother. . On Saturday mother and father fasted, the children would cook the meals so mother was free to study with father and to go out with him. When the summer vacation came, father would say to us: "Your mother should have a vacation, so you all do the cooking." He would ask us if there was anything we needed, if he could help in anyway. So in the summer for one month we had to do the cooking. Father used to ask us: "Will mother spend her whole life only in the kitchen? Will she not also learn to read and write like you?" That is how it was.

In this way father taught my mother. Mother had studied up to sixth class. My elder brother and I also taught Ma a lot while we were studying. After high school I taught mother English and my brother taught her other languages. And in later age my mother became Akola Zilla High School Educational Board Chairperson. The credit for this goes to father.

On one occasion, I was speaking with mother and expressing my wish to study in Varanasi and not Nagpur. Mother said: "Why go so far away? Nagpur is only four hours away. Why not go there instead of Varanasi? And I replied, "You are not educated, so how will you understand the difference between studying in Nagpur and in Varanasi. Even if I explain it to you, you will not understand." Father overheard me and said: "Vimal touch your mother's feet and ask forgiveness". I did that. He then asked: "Why did you have to ask forgiveness? Why did you insult your mother? She has not gone to school, you know that. Why could you not explain to her the difference between studying in Varanasi and in Nagpur? If you cannot do that much, what is the advantage of your studying higher?"

Father used to give all his money to my mother. The money was put in bottles in a cupboard. There were bottles for different denominations of notes. The rule was who ever needed money would take some from the jars. A notebook was kept there for making entries. I never remembered having to ask father for any money. He used to say, "I am earning for every body so why need you ask me, but you have to keep accounts."

Respect for Physical Labor

My father tried to teach us that all work is of equal importance. Sometimes there were hurt feelings, when we taught these lessons. For example, when I passed matriculation, got a first class and scholarship and my brother passed inter and the summer vacations began, I told my mother, "As the results have come, we won't do the cooking today". Father was listening and said: "Ok, then all of us will fast today, because there is a rule in our house, that you'll do the cooking."

So my elder brother and I decided we wouldn't do the cooking because we thought in other homes, families celebrate when the children pass and are given sweets to eat, so what is this? After some time mother said to us: "Why don't you cook the meals? Father is left hungry". Since we didn't listen, she went to father and said "Let me cook, the children are hungry". Father tried to explain to mother that if you pamper them and spoil them by this one act of leniency, you will spoil their attitude to life in later years. They should learn that all work is equal, whether it is cooking or studying. One is not more important that the other and in our house it will not do. They should realise that all work is equal. Life is pure. In the end we did the cooking.

Cooking was done on a wood stove. I had learnt how to light it and cook on the stove, just as I knew how to milk the cows. We had two cows. And when we started cooking, father came to help us. He said, "You do not appreciate that mother works all day and feeds you. You give no importance to that, only to passing exams. This was his way of giving us the culture and of training us.

Father was very fond of gardening; we had all varieties of sweet smelling flowers and fruits in the garden. When father returned home from the court, he would go to the well and along with mother would pull up the water. My brothers and I would take the water and water the garden.

I have learnt from my father to respect labor, to be honest and to live a rhythmic, balanced, and disciplined life. That is the way he lived, he had a very disciplined life even in taking his food and in speech. I have never seen any change in the quantity of food he took.

Respect for Helpers

Vimalaji's father taught his children to treat all as equals and to respect every human being.

We had one helper called Nathu uncle. Once a year, clothes would be made for us and at the same time they were made for our helper Nathu uncle. He was treated with great respect. On a festival day along with father's thal (plate), one would be placed for Nathu uncle. He would be served first and then my brothers would sit to eat. You could not speak to him discourteously. My father used to say: "I do not like this category of servants; I don't like it at all. What do you mean by calling people servants? Somebody has a need, he does a job, why don't you treat him with respect, why call him a servant?" And then when I went to Europe I heard the word 'helper'. They would say: "Have you got a help?' They do not use the word servant in Europe. They would either ask: "Have you got help, or have you someone to assist you?" Father didn't like to use the word 'servant'. Nobody could even address him by saying 'Oh Nathuram'. Father trusted him fully. If father had to go for a case to Nagpur, he would leave Nathu uncle in charge of everything. He really behaved like an uncle.

The other helper we had was a Bhaya who came to draw water from the well. If anyone came from U.P. in Maharasthra it was a custom to call him Bhaya. Even the paniwalla bhaya had to be addressed as Kaka (uncle). My brothers used to get very irritated.

This was the conditioning, the culture that we were given. Later on in life I had no difficulty understanding Marx. In our own house from childhood I saw there was no distinction between castes, classes and no discrimination between sexes and there was respect for all religions. It was a cosmopolitan atmosphere at home so I had no difficulty in understanding Krishnamurti or Karl Marx.

Respect for Speech

Father would not tolerate anyone using swear words in the house in front of us, not even by his friends. Keshavrao Bhole, Vasudevrao Bhole and Bapusahib Thakar were his very close friends. One among these friends had come, and we were serving him food. From his mouth a swear word came out. Father was eating and he gave his friend a slap on his cheek. He said "In my home where there are ladies living, no swear word can be used".

One another incident: my uncle had come from Raipur and he called out to my elder brother by addressing him 'aera gadde' (Oh! Donkey.) Father said: "If you don't know the difference between a human being and gadde (donkey), I'll tell you." He could not stand it. He used to say: "Why do you pollute the speech, the speech with which you take God's name, and with which you tell the truth?

Foundation Of Science And Independence

Scientific Attitude

There were many principles that Vimalaji valued and lived later on in life had their foundation in the small things her father taught them while they were still children. Vimalaji describes many such incidents she remembers from childhood.

My father encouraged and cultivated in us a scientific way of looking at life. I will give you an example. If my brothers and I said we wanted to go to see a movie, father would ask: "What is the picture about? Who is the story writer? Whose photography is it? Are you going to see it because of the actor or because of the story?" And when we returned, he would ask us how we liked the story. He gave us a vision of how to look at things, even if it was entertainment and seeing a film. He gave a scientific foundation to every aspect of life.

It was difficult then for us to understand and appreciate this scientific approach. We used to say: "None of the parents of our friends ask such questions," but that was his way of teaching.

Even when my brother Sudhakar wanted to smoke, he spoke to my father and my father explained everything to him about cigarettes. He asked Sudhakar to make a rule only of smoking two cigarettes a day. He never stopped us from doing anything but instead encouraged discussion. He never said: "Don't do it", but asked: "Why do you want to do it?" The emphasis would be on understanding and not doing anything we did not understand. This was my parents' way of teaching. Maybe in this way we got inner freedom.

Understanding is like a vow. Once you understand something, there is no need to take a vow; you will do it. There should be no difference between understanding and action. There should be no time lag between understanding and action. There should be no time lag between understanding, action and living of it.

Learning Adaptability and Adjustability

I learnt from mother how to live with family members by adapting and adjusting. She would say: "One has to learn this art of living with people, whether you get married and have a household or not."

Father taught us to see things in their wholeness, to catch the essence of wholeness in the particular. I think that was his style of looking at things.

We were taught that if you have values, stay firm and strong as the Himalayas in upholding them. But in those matters not related to values, there has to be give and take. You have to learn adaptability and adjustability, whether you marry or not. Learn to be flexible, to give and take in minor matters, and where matters of value are concerned be as firm as the Himalayas.

Learning to be Independent

The initiation into self-reliance and independence I received in childhood. We did all the work at home. We all used to wash our own clothes, even father. Saturday evening meal and Sunday meal had to be cooked by the children. It was holiday for Ma. He taught that the young should respect their elders and be independent.

From Ma I learnt what it was to be full of light and fearlessness. One incident I remember shows Mother's invaluable guidance. When I got an invitation to visit America for the World Assembly of Youth - I was selected by four Universities - I went from Nagpur to Akola and told my mother about the invitation. My mother said: "You should go". I was surprised at that. I knew father would say no; I was hoping that ma would say "No." She asked: "Why have you to come to ask? Don't you want to go?" And I replied: "To go so far and alone?" And Ma replied:" So this is your devotion, this is your bhakti? You think your God is only in India and not in U.S.A.?" She opened my eyes and immediately I understood her point was correct and said the decision is made.

Then she said: "Know one thing, if your heart is pure and you have faith in God, then there is nobody born who will look at you with bad sight.

Later on in life, I started to put the same truth in my own language and would say: "That as long as there is faith in the Divine and faith in the Divinity within - if these two are there, you can do anything.

Her contribution to my life is great because the closeness for mother is very deep; it is very difficult to remember her contributions, to think about her.

Father taught me a kind of faith in the Divinity within. Mother gave another kind of direction to that faith. Now the young boys and girls come and ask me give us some guidance and I say: "If you are interested in living, then fear nothing and don't cry over anything." That is what I learnt in childhood - the words, the language; the way to express it came later.

There was no companionship with my brothers and sister. I could say it was not so with anyone – there was an inner aloneness. The education for living in an inner aloneness was there. So later on in life, I never knew what loneliness was, because there was a joy in an inner aloneness. Whenever I had time, I would either read or close my eyes and sit in dhyan or do my work. So in life I have never the problem of how to pass the day, how to pass one's time or the feeling of being bored. I could never make use of such words and phrases I never knew what it meant to be bored.

I had to stay in one room with my brothers and sister. They used to be talking loudly, fighting with each other and I would be reading my books. That is why I never knew what it means to be disturbed. I learned that when you are concentrated, there is no question of being disturbed. Whatever the circumstances I am not disturbed. I did not need to say: "Now I'm studying so don't make a noise, don't disturb me." There is no occasion or cause for that.

To tell you the truth I have been taught everything. I have not had to make an effort to learn anything, whatever I have learnt, whatever I have or whatever there is has been given.

Later on in life Vimalaji expressed her appreciation for all that she learnt during childhood.

Vimala is indebted to her father who told her when she was about seven years old, never to accept anything on the authority of a person or a book or tradition. Even as a child there was in indescribable freedom to watch, to observe, to know and to understand without accepting or rejecting anything, without identifying with any authority, even of the parents themselves. The privilege of growing up in such unconditional freedom has been a benediction in her life.

Chapter Two

The Spiritual Foundation

The Light Grows

A glorious innovative
dance of life
that emerges when
an experimental, scientific attitude
towards spirituality
is in synergy with ancient, invincible faith.

The Gift

I have come to sing the song of Life,
I know not how to teach.

I have come to love the diversity of Life
I know not how to preach.

I have come to live a sane, healthy life
I know not how to lead.

I have come to enjoy the perfume of Life
I have no message for you.

My heart is a lotus
These words are petals
This is my gift unto you.

... *Vimala*

Chapter Two

The Spiritual Foundation

The Light Grows

INTRODUCTION

We have seen the different influences that molded Vimalaji's life since her birth, her family background, home atmosphere and hereditary conditionings. All these influences helped not only to mold her character but also to form a foundation for much of her later thinking and teaching. Nothing was spoken just from the study of books or abstract philosophy but had the authenticity of living experience behind it.

Now we will see how even her spiritual search was based on experimentation, self-education, study and discipline.

Vimalaji's life has been revolutionary on all fronts, including the field of spirituality. She has shown by her life how one could tread a path alone, even the razor-edge path of spirituality. She has made clear how to go beyond the mind, *thus bringing about a mutation in consciousness, and contributing to the overall development of humanity, taking human evolution one step forward.*

Spiritual Foundation

As Vimalaji often tells us, her search for God began in childhood. In that search though there was no guru or a figure of authority. Vimalaji came across many great beings who helped her and from whom she learnt a lot. Besides experimenting on her own, Vimalaji learnt much from her grandfather and her father – as she says the atmosphere at home in childhood was like that of an Ashram. From a young age, she was in contact with many saints. She was in touch with Sant Tukroji Maharaj from childhood as he was a friend to her grandfather and mother.

Vimalaji describes her early days of spiritual search.

Maintaining Independence

During my childhood father said: "Don't make any individual your guru. God alone is your guru; he is sitting within you." Father did not oppose the idea of a guru, but he used to say Atman is the Guru. Atman will give you guidance.

Father would not stop me from visiting any ashram I wanted to; I could discuss religious ideas with anyone.

But the one thing he emphasized: don't make any individual your guru; don't commit yourself to a person. Because of father's guidance, I had no difficulty understanding Krishnamurti, years later, when I heard him say: "Don't take a Guru".

Whatever came to my mind, during childhood, whatever I felt like doing, I would try out. Whatever books came into my hand I would read, and what I understood from them I would jot down in notebook.

Tratak

Vimalaji conducted many experiments on her own, because of the vow she had given to her father that she would not make any individual her guru. So she learnt the hard way, but there were many aspects that were just inborn For instance Vimalaji would say: "The sense of agelessness has been within me since my very childhood." Then there was the foundation – the physical foundation in which the Divine essence was to express itself and be contained, many enlightened souls had expressed their appreciation on how pure it was.

I used to practice doing Tratak in front of sun and moon. Before that I used to do Tratak in front of Lord Ram's picture. During that time Tukroji Maharaj *(a Saint and acquaintance of the family since his childhood days)* came home and asked "Vimal whose dhyan are you doing?" "Ram's" "Where is your Ram, show me?" I took him to see the photo. He said: "This is paper on which there is a picture; it is made by someone. You are doing Dhyan on that? Why? God is not made by man." "Ok." Then I rolled up the picture and put it away. What to do now? So I started doing Tratak on the sun and the moon.

When Tukroji Maharaj visited the next time and asked: "How is your Dhyan?" I said: "Fine." "Whose Dhyan are you doing now?" I replied: "On that which is not man-made, the sun and the moon." And he replied: "What is seen by the external eyes that is not Dhyan. Look within." "How to look within?" "Search and find out."

Conducting Experiments

Vimalaji gave great emphasis to looking after the purity of the physical body because it is the body that is to contain higher vibrations when the transformation takes place. If the vibrations were not pure, the body would not be able to stand the higher vibrations.

Vimalaji has great discipline in eating, sleeping, maintaining purity of the vibrations of food, living place, and rhythm in times of eating, sleeping etc. For an enquirer it is essential to maintain the vibrational purity of the body, and the main way is through food, because it is food that becomes the substance of the body. Vimalaji didn't eat in restaurants but always made it a point of cooking her own meals.

During my childhood to get control over the senses, I would experiment with different things. For instance, I would not have salt for one month, or I would not eat hot food with chilli for one month. I would sleep without a mattress or just spread a mat and sleep on it, or spread newspapers on an iron-spring cot and sleep on it. I used to test the body in this way. I used to do Asanas, Pranayama, Surya Namaskar.

I have to live in everyday life with my body. We might say, "My body," but the body is really an expression of cosmic life. What we call "my body" is condensed cosmos. All that which exists is cosmos, all the energies existing and operating in the cosmos are operating in what is called this physical organism. It is a conditioned and condensed form of the cosmic life, because the Intelligence has its abode in this body.

The body is a mysterious phenomenon. It has inheritance and conditioned energies due to inheritance. It has hereditary trends, excellences, weaknesses, deformities, shortcomings etc.

The body, also, has many autonomous systems hiding beneath the skin and the flesh. Every system is autonomous, independent and yet they are interrelated, organically, so they make one whole. It is a functioning of many creative energies operating through very many organs and yet making a harmonious whole. It is wholeness like the cosmos, it is a wholeness having innumerable energies – some are conditioned and some are not conditioned.

My understanding tells me that the body should not be taken for granted. We should not rely upon the knowledge of the human anatomy or on books about the human mind; we have to watch – the understanding comes through watching, observing.

Unless you love life, unless you love the magnificent body you have, you will never observe and understand its needs. What the mind decides may be an artificially stimulated want and not a physical need. In order to understand, I have to watch the body and find out how it responds to sound, what kind of food agrees with it, the frequency of the intake, the quality, the quantity, how much sleep it requires – all that has to be discovered. It is possible for every human being to discover that. The unknown has to be discovered, only then it can be understood.

Gopinath Kaviraj used to visit me and say: "There is one "Anandmai Mai" (mother of joy) and then here is "Snehamai Mai" (mother of love). He said that he had not seen such a pure foundation. (This had been recorded.) In the language of tantriks which Gopinath Kaviraj used, the body was called the aadhar, the foundation. He would ask me about my father and my mother, and remark that the foundation is very pure. Swamiji, living in Lohgadh, Mayawati in the Himalayas said similar things. (Achyutji had stayed with him.) Pratyaanand Saraswati said the same thing.

Even after hearing what these great beings said about me, I did not relate it to myself, to the ego. That is why I was able to live as an ordinary human being. So whether Tukroji Maharaj did puja or Gopinath Kaviraj did puja (to me), all this did not matter, it was secondary.

Relating to the World

My search in childhood was to reach the essence beyond words and beyond form, yet I did not view the world as an illusion. The connection, the relation I had with the material things, with food, with clothes, with music, drama, literature, my interest in these increased. I began to feel that God has blessed us, has given us senses through which we can take in the essence of these things.

The feeling, that the physical world is an illusion and impermanent did not come up in my mind, as it does in the hearts of most Vedantists. I did not want an uninteresting life, even if it led to the peak of spirituality. I have said since childhood that if God is the essence of all joy, then this life should also be filled with joy. We should be totally living in that joyous state; we must live in that joyous state.

Starting a Vivekananda Mandal

I was intoxicated by the words of Swami Vivekananda. This intoxication lasted till I completed my B.A. My feet were on the earth but the eyes did not remain on the ground.

When I was twelve years old, I began a Vivekananda Study Group. I liked to read at home, so I gathered the children from the neighbourhood and would speak about Swamiji - I loved to talk with them all about Swamiji and also about Swami Ram Tirth, Ram Badsha. When the boys and girls of the neighbourhood came, I would read from Vivekananda's books. We studied the books and then we would sit in Dhyan.

I often say now: "You can get intoxicated by words." I used to be so intoxicated by the words that it was difficult to keep my feet on the ground. It was as if some spirit is shaking me around, that is the way I was moved by the words of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirth. I identified deeply with the words, with their meanings.

Early Consciousness

God Intoxication

When I ate my food, I felt that Brahma was in the food, When I drank water, it was a discovery of the Atman, I had heard that from *Atman* came *Akasha* - space, from *Akasha* came *Vayu* - air, from *Vayu* came *Agni* - fire, from *Agni* came *Jal* - water, from *Jal* came *Prithvi* - earth. When I saw the rays of the sun, I felt I was glimpsing the manifestation of Atman, having an opportunity to see it with my eyes. I felt I was in God's embrace even through the five gross organs of action.

This intoxication was with me from a young age. From the age of twelve I used to live in intoxication and with a one-pointed passion for God realisation. The material world did not become a veil for me. It became a door for me; it became a bridge for connection with the Divine.

In all this I got a lot of help from Gyaneshwari (Commentaries on the Gita written by the child Saint Gyaneshwar). I could not read Amrut Anubhav then. (Another book written by Sant Gyaneshwar, meaning Experience of Divine Bliss). I tried but I could not understand it. I feel due to the opportunity I got at a young age to listen to Amrut Anubhav, I had the experience of the Divine manifestation of joy. If I say this, it sounds presumptuous, so I will modify it and say, there used to be awareness in the consciousness of the manifestation of Divine joy. Das Guna Maharaj, from Pandarpur, used to speak on the book beautifully. He would explain it in such a simple language that even though I was so young, I was able to catch it. There may be some praise for my style (of speaking on Gyaneshwari), but his style deserves more admiration.

I read Amrut Anubhav, touching the depth of it, only after my M.A. Earlier I had heard the Katha for nine days with much appreciation, but till then I had not touched the book Amrut Anubhav, I was so fully satisfied with Gyaneshwari.

Exploring Viewpoints

Vimalaji also recalls how during her childhood she noticed unusual capabilities that she calls Shaktis. All the exposure she got in childhood to talks and public functions helped in the overall development.

I attended many talks. Many speakers came to Akola because it was a seat of culture and education. Mother and father never stopped me from listening to any talks, but I had to make adjustments in completing housework in order to attend them.

I remember on one occasion, during my school days, I had attended a talk by Chitalye Sahib in Akola Town Hall in honour of Madam Blavatsky on her birthday. The talk lasted for over an hour and I closed my eyes and listened. After returning home I wrote down everything I heard verbatim. Father was very surprised and very happy on reading it. He showed it to Chitalye Sahib who was shocked how I was able to reproduce the whole talk just like a tape recorder. In the same way I wrote down verbatim three of his other speeches.

That is when I realised that I had the Shakti of good memory. To test and increase this Shakti, I would go to a talk and take a book with me. I would listen to the talk with my ears and read the book with my eyes. Coming back home, I would write the summary of the talk and of what I had read.

Father had a friend, Advocate C. Kaka, who ran the Theosophical Society and organised talks by freedom fighters. Whenever there was a talk, he would tell Bapu to bring Vimala. I don't know how many talks I attended. I would go to all the talks. C. Kaka used to say: "This is my little Anne Besant." I don't know why.

When political leaders were invited, the father of a school friend, Sarla (now Sarla Birla), would invite me to attend the opening ceremony. Sarla and I would be put on the stage and asked to sing Vande Mataram on the dais. I don't know in how many ragas I must have sung Vande Mataram in. All this was before Metric. We would sing Vande Mataram with folded hands. I would be wearing khadi channiya choli. We were present at every public meeting. We were even taken to welcome Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru at the train station.

The father of one of my classmates was a comrade in the communist party. When there were classes by Comrade Pensekar, I sat in the classes, even though I did not understand one word. The daughter of Comrade Pensekar later on went to Nagpur and stayed in the commune of the communists. To see what a Commune was like, I went to stay with her in her cell for three days, but I didn't like it, so I left.

Father's friend Advocate Godbole was also a communist and I went to his house to listen to talks. His wife was mother's friend so there was no restriction on my going. Another communist leader, Sardesai gave talks and I'd go to listen to him.

What I want to convey is that I was brought up in a very liberal, catholic atmosphere.

Staying Focused

Vimalaji was aware of the way people looked at her as if evaluating her, whether at home or when studying in school and high school. Vimalaji felt as if the teachers, the elders had weighing scales in their eyes and they were always evaluating her. These are some of the difficulties a sensitive person like Vimalaji had to go through, but she did not complain.

I used to feel that others were evaluating me. Just as people look at animals and name a price, I felt this type of evaluation. Because of my different nature, all the friends who used to visit my mother would ask her: "Why is your Vimal like that?" Whenever I walked pass guests or went close to them to serve them tea or food, I was conscious of the way they looked at me, as if thinking, "Who is the funny creature who has been born to our friend, to our sister? From which planet has she come?" Even among family and friends, there was the look of doubt, of questioning.

My talk of sanyas, of renunciation, my fondness for reading, caused comments among neighbours and friends. Friends used to say: "Go out and play, run around," but I wouldn't go out. In the neighbourhood there would be a lot of discussion about me,"Why is Bapu Sahib's daughter behaving like that. Kamal (my younger sister) doesn't do that, why does she?" In fact my younger sister was very fond of good things, like new clothes, jewellery. She would say: "Vimal if you don't like it, you can give it to me. So I'd remove whatever it was and give it to her. If you don't like your jari saree (saree made from threads of gold) you can give it to me, and you can have my plain one instead". "Ok." and I'd give it to her.

Wherever I would go, people would look at me in a judgmental way. One day my elder brother was talking with my father about someone, and said that boy was very bad. He told father: "I will never go to see him." And father replied to him: "See Sudhakar, a human being can spend his whole life trying to understand himself, and in one hour you can make a judgement upon someone?" That one sentence of father has had a great impact on me. It touched me very deeply, and afterwards it never occurred to me to judge others by my values.

I used to find human society very odd. People in society want to put a price on everything; they want to bargain with everything as if life were a bazaar. All the time calculating how much is this thing, is it convenient for me, how much does it suit me? It is as if human relationships were a bazaar. They have made life into a bazaar. Bajaaru jivan, I would call it. I would say I don't want this kind of bazaaru jivan, I don't want this kind of life."

I used to feel insulted that people evaluate one another and so I would withdraw within. I would feel a drying of the throat, I would not want to look up, not want to look at anything or anyone. These feelings were there a lot.

In the jungle there is no evaluation, no judgement. I felt a judgement-free, evaluation-free companionship with the plants, with the trees, with the animals, with the birds. I felt free there. I felt now there is no one here who will pass judgements, who will make evaluations, who will try to bargain, make a deal with me. So there I could express myself. There was such spontaneity and no need to suppress spontaneity.

Non-Personal Consciousness

During a talk on Chandogya Upanishad, in 1993 Vimalaji spoke about non-personal awareness.

When Atman consciousness - the flame of awareness of the nature of Reality - wakes up, how does the further dissolution between this flame of awareness and the cosmic intelligence take place? A very crucial question. The voluntary crucifixion by the ego of the ego itself, on the cross of psycho-physical structure, has taken place, and the resurrection of the personal image into a non personal image has also taken place. What next? The next is the grace of the Divine, the descent of the supreme. (Shri Aurobindo called it the grace of the Divine, as do the Upanishads).

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That is, the whole Divine consciousness or the Supreme Cosmic Intelligence makes its abode in an individual being. There is no difference then, in the quality of consciousness and the quality of Atman -- its seeing, its knowing, and its functioning. There is no difference in quality between the Supreme Cosmic Intelligence and the Intelligence expressed through the brain and mind of the person.

With the dawn of that non-personal awareness, which has neither subjectivity nor objectivity, one has entered the dimension of Divine grace. The person looks like a person because he has a body; the senses etc. but the content of consciousness has changed completely, and there is a kind of universality. The quality of the person, the responses, everything has changed.

Upanishads accept the possibility of grace descending upon the individual. And yet, much can be said about the accent of the matter through purification and non-identification, the transmutation of ego, of personality into an impersonal flame of awareness.

Much can be said, not as poetry, but out of personal experience. One could describe that one-thousand petal flame of impersonal awareness, shining in the blue waters of silence, in the cave of heart and yet it will sound like poetry, so one has to use restraint, and cease further description.

Spiritual Events

Visiting Brindavan

In childhood I went with some of my friends to Brindavan (sacred pilgrimage spot in North India associated with Lord Krishna). We were visiting the grandparents of a friend in Kota Rajasthan and they made arrangements for us to go to Mathura - Brindavan.

In Brindavan there is a Kunj or garden called Madhuvanti, where there is a statue of Radha and Gopal (Lord Krishna) on a swing. Many people do Pradikshina - walk respectfully around the statue. When I went there, I was repeating the jaap of Ram, Ram.. From grandfather I had learnt Ram Naam (name) so I was repeating Ram Naam. After I had done five Pradikshinas (in the Kunj you have to do eleven pradikshanas), a boy five or six appeared, held onto my sari and said: *Ram naam gaogi to khatee baer khaogi, Krishna naam gaogi to makhan-mishri paogi* (If you sing Ram naam you will have to eat sour baer fruit, if you sing Krishna naam, you will obtain sweet butter). He kept holding on to me. I continued doing the rounds and wouldn't stop saying Ram Naam, and He kept repeating His verse.

After doing one more Pradikshina, I said to Him: "OK Baba, now I'll sing Krishna's name. How does one say it?" "*Shri Krishna Sharanam Mamah* - that is what you have to say, don't you even know that much?" So He started repeating with me: *Shri Krishna Sharanam Mamah* (I take refuge in Shri Krishna). He was also saying: *Mere Lal Ko Dekhene Me Chali, To Me Bhi Ho Gayi Lal. Mere Lal Ki Mukh Me Lal Lila. Mere Lal Jamuna Tirth Khada. Lal Ko Dekhan Me Chali, To Me Bhi Ho Gai Lal Hi Lal.* (When I went to see my Beloved I became the Beloved. My Beloved is standing on the banks of the Jamuna. In the mouth of My Beloved is the whole dance of the universe. When I went to see my Beloved, then I also became the Beloved.)

I did six Pradikshinas repeating Ram Naam and five repeating *Shri Krishna Sharanam Mamah.* After the eleventh Pradikshina I bent down and did pranaams to Him, and when I raised my self from the pranaam the boy was no longer there. I got tired out looking for that boy. In spite of there being only one gate, I didn't find the boy.

In 1998 Vimalaji wrote a poem about meeting a youth in Brindavan:

I had gone to Brindavan
Just to see the lovely garden
But got lost in the shady lanes there
Oh! I am lost in the lanes of Brindavan

Two dark-skinned youth suddenly appeared
And started playing
Oh! I am lost in the lanes of Brindavan

They played hide and seek
Lispingly they talked and talked
As if they knew me since ages
Oh! I am lost in the lanes of Brindavan

Their big eyes were full of friendship
Vimal was bathed all over in that fount of nectar
Oh! I am lost in the lanes of Brindavan

Rishikesh Experiment

Vimalaji describes her love for experimenting. She undertook one experiment in a cave in Terri in the Himalayas, to discover first hand the effect of sound vibrations. From this experiment, Vimalaji discovered some important truths.

I was fond of experimenting. I kept experimenting with eating, drinking, silence. In the experiments in eating, I would stop eating a particular food and see what the outcome was. I used to do such experiments. Whatever came to me, whatever I thought I should do, I would experiment with.

After sitting for the M.A. examination, I went to the Himalayas. About twelve miles near Theri, there is a cave of Swami Ram Tirth, in which he had lived and done his Sadhana. I went to stay there for ten weeks. Grandfather's friend, Hanuman Prasad Poddar had an Ashram in Rishikesh near Swarga Ashram. On one side of Ganges was Swami Ram Tirth's cave and Divine Light Ashram of Shivanandji and on the other side was the Ashram of Hanuman Prasad Poddar.

Dada (a fatherly friend) had suggested that I meet Hanuman Prasad Poddar and request his help in making arrangements for a place to stay, then go for a period of silence. So I went to Swarga Ashram and met Hanuman Prasad Poddar. He made arrangements for me to stay at Tehri, , in a cave near the banks of the river Ganges, for twelve or fourteen weeks. Shri Jainendraji (friend of the family) was also there. There used to be daily satsang at the Ashram, which he used to attend..

The cave was so formed that to get inside, one had to crawl in. Inside was a bunk made of stone; there was nothing else. I had with me a collection of the ten Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita, just these two books, two blankets and two sets of clothes. Besides that I had matches, agarbatti, and candles, but I had not taken anything for cooking meals.

I would read the books and conduct the experiments. I did as many experiments as I could, with jaap, with silence, and for control of senses.

On going there I started Pranav (OM) jaap, then the jaap of Hari Om Tat Sat. Half the time I would do Omkar jaap - sometimes aloud, sometimes silently for one and a half hours, then I would rest for half an hour and then start jaap of Hari Om Tat Sat for another one and a half hours, then rest again and then start Omkar jaap. In this way, I would do jaap.

I wanted to see what effect Mantra Jaap has on the body. I increased the duration of the jaap to eighteen hours. I wanted to study the effects of sound. I wanted to see the light in sound and its effect? When I increased the duration of the jaap to eighteen hours, some energies were awakened in the body.

I don't remember if in the ten weeks I saw the face of any human being or heard the voice of any human being.

In the night when I felt sleepy, I would sleep and wake up when the sleep left. As I did not have a watch with me, it was only a feel of time .

Near the cave there were some banana and mango trees, maybe they had grown from the time Swamiji had lived there, So I took my nutrition from them. The bananas and mangoes were not ripe. I would dig a hole, put the fruit in the hole, and cover the fruit with earth and sticks – which I had hunted for earlier - and light a fire. Whatever part of the fruit was cooked, I would eat.

I drank the water from Gangaji. The greatest damage to my health was through drinking the water. The sand is so fine in the water, that without straining it through a cloth, one should never drink it. But I had not asked anyone, and I was doing things in an unscientific way.

In those ten weeks I never ate any cereals. After fifteen days, because of eating half-cooked, half-raw food and drinking the unstrained water from Gangaji, diarrhea started.

I did a lot of injustice to my body. This was the beginning of the injustice. After the diarrhea started, the body kept getting weak. But there was no difference to the Sadhana. Even though ill, I stayed for ten weeks.

The body kept loosing weight and began drying up like a stick. My eyes were sinking inside. Yet I did not feel that the body would die. Maybe the fear was there that before the ten weeks were over that I would get very ill and that nobody would know where I was.

I had done a lot of damage to the body that much I remember. It was unscientific Sadhana. I did it in the wrong way. I overdid it.

In the morning, I would go for my bath. Near Gangaji there was a broken ghat; the steps were not good. I used to go there and sitting on the last step, have my bath,

Now I don't remember if it was nine or ten weeks and on which day, but when I went down to bathe in the Ganga, my foot slipped and I fell into the Ganga. I tried to swim as well as I could, but the diarrhoea was so acute, it drained me of all my energy. I had become very weak and so I lost consciousness. My body was swept down the river unconscious.

The body floated down the Ganges. About two miles down, the disciples of Swami Shivananda were bathing in the Ganges and they saw this body floating down the river. They wondered if the body were dead or alive, so they went to investigate and saw that there was life in it. As they were disciples of Swami Shivananda Saraswati, they took me to him, he arranged for me to stay in his Ashram.

Visiting Shivananda at that time was Jainendrakumar Jain. When Shivananda told him how they found an unconscious lady in the river, he immediately said: "I wonder if it is our Vimala? She had gone to a cave in the Theri Mountains." Soon he saw that it was Vimala.

Jainendrakumar Jain and his wife Bhagawati nursed me. For twenty-one days Bhagawatiji served me; I have no words to describe how well she looked after me. Then they gave the news to Dada and Dada and Brijlal Biyani both came to fetch me and they took me to Akola.

That is how I became ill and had to return from Theri. However, I did not stop doing such experiments; I kept doing them because that was my life. I used to say that, this manifested world is a shadow of the unmanifest. What is that unmanifest? If God is omnipresent and is in everything, then besides the manifest world that can be seen, what is His essence, what is His omnipresent form?

Results of the Experiment

Siddhis

The Sadhana I did during my stay in the cave in Theri was only of jaap and silence. I would see light; hear naad - sound, could hear seven kinds of naad from the body. I could hear a flute, the ring of bells, ringing chimes of bell, the sound of a shell, of the mrudang (South Indian styled tabla), different kinds of naad. I could see light. There was nothing but light, light filled my eyes and the cave was filled with light -prakash. Sometimes it was blue, sometimes golden color.

Sometimes I felt Omkar is not coming out of my mouth, but from the cave I would hear *Hmmmmmmm* as if Omkar vibration was resonating. It used to feel that way.

During the day sitting under a tree I would read Gitaji - eighteen chapters, sometimes I would read Upanishads. I didn't have any paper or pencil with me I never felt lonely.

So because of jaap, because of silence, because of solitude, from essence I went one step ahead and reached the light.

In my body besides the muscles and bones, I felt there is only light. If I looked outside with the eyes, in the light, the light of the sun, I saw another kind of light or a combination of lights. I saw in the sunlight a different kind of combination of light - something qualitatively different from the sunlight or the moonlight. There was something else mixed in it, I could only use the words "something else" to describe it, and even today I don't know of a better way of expressing it.

I do not know what caused me to experience light in different parts of the body. Was it because of the study of books or because I was doing the experiments or because I always felt that the universe and all its products are for satisfying the needs of the body and the mind and not for taking pleasure out of them. I never wanted to take pleasure from any object in the world.

During this period because of mantra jaap, some siddhis were awakened: clairaudience, clairvoyance and telepathy – I would know what is going on in the mind of the person sitting in front of me and I would describe it to them. It used to create a difficulty for me. If I looked towards their face then I would see their life like a picture. If I were sitting here in Mount Abu and if somebody were in Bombay I could hear what they were saying or see what they were doing. So I got scared. I said: "I don't want siddhis". I had read in Gyaneshwari that these energies could be obstacles; I had read this in Das Bodh, in many other books, so I left doing jaap.

Quality of Silence

From this period spent in silence, it came to my awareness that the peace one experiences while working in the midst of people is different from the peace that one experiences in solitude. The quality of the silence that I experienced while sitting in the cave is different than the quality of my consciousness and its silence when I am with people. There is not much light in the consciousness in the silence in the cave; whereas the light shines brighter in the consciousness in the silence and steadiness during the movement of activity.

Gati and sthithi - action and stillness are interwoven and move together. Silence and speech are interwoven and move together. When speaking if the words move from the inner silence, then there is a different kind of joy in that silence and in that dimension of silence.

I realised that though silence and speech are mutually opposite, they are inter-woven, like you cannot separate day from night, birth from death, you cannot separate movement from stillness, movement from steadiness and relationships from aloneness.

Relationship and Aloneness

I had an idea before 1951, that it was necessary to be alone and go to Himalayas, that illusion was cleared while living in the cave. Now I would say that such an approach is unscientific; then I only used to describe my experience, by saying: "I feel the consciousness has less light, has less brightness" (when it is living in isolation)

In the solitude in the cave, the experience I had of peace – Shanti, did not have life in it. I felt there was some heaviness in it – it was lifeless. Even the solitude was negative – not positive, not effective.

Now I realize there can be movement without leaving the inner stillness. When we walk on the earth, our feet are moving and touching the earth; they grip the earth but then release their grip. Similarly even in a state of steadiness, of stillness, movement is experienced. Speech walks on the feet of words but without leaving the peace of silence. If you raise both your feet from the ground then you cannot walk on earth.

When there is steadiness in the movement of relationships, when there is a steadiness in speech, the feel of aloneness is complete. In spite of being in the midst of people, the aloneness is complete; when one is in solitude, that is not so.

The movement that takes place in relationships, the communication and response that takes place in relationships, happens without leaving the aloneness of solitude. If the movement that takes place in relationship arises in solitude, when it sprouts in solitude, then its consciousness, its qualities are different. The silence in the cave was lifeless, negative. The ecstasy of consciousness was not there. Exuberance of ecstasy seems to be the ultimate goal of spirituality, but the spontaneity of the Atman, exuberance, joy, were lacking.

I felt that in this peace, there is rigidity, lifelessness. In this silence there is negativity and in this solitude there is a lack of exuberance, a lack of ecstasy, a lack of light.

Action and Non-Action

I can say the important thing is attitude towards action and non-action. It does not matter whether you are active outwardly or you are totally inactive and sedentary, what matters is the state of your consciousness.

Once the attraction is gone then whatever you do is because you want to, you love to. Some may remain active, some may remain inactive, it does not matter – each does according to his liking. It is dependent upon temperament, upon conditionings.

Where I am standing today, I can say: *Na karma lipyate nare na jame thishulokashu kartoyam aste kencham (Action is unconditional unfoldment of being. The unfoldment of the being by itself becomes a fulfillment. Such action can never become a bondage – Ishavasya Upanishad # 2.* I have reached that state, where the karmas do not bind; then I was not there.

If I had not lived a life of action, I could not say that the karmas do not bind. If I had not stayed there in the solitude of the cave, I would not have realized the essence of silence. I would not have been able to catch it, so that is why man moves along according to his conditionings, not giving importance to action or inaction, what remains is giving importance to the attitude of living without initiative .

Living in Relationship

To be alive is to be related, to interact. If we are living somewhere in a cave, in the mountains, if we are living somewhere in physical isolation, there is physical survival, there is existence, but there is no living.

In physical or psychological isolation there is no life, there is only survival of the biological structure; there is survival and continuity of the psycho-physical structure. Living has dynamism of its own. It cannot be scattered, passive; it is alertness, sensitivity. Life is dynamic; no energy is ever static. Life is never static. I may be alone but not physically or mentally isolated.

Aloneness, solitude and isolation have to be differentiated and understood clearly. In aloneness there is an inner freedom; there is no slavery to tradition, to authority, to persons, to dogmas. Aloneness has its own beauty and ecstasy, but isolation stinks of passivity and staleness. Human beings can even become stale living in a big city if psychologically they are isolated completely.

The movement that takes place in relationships, the communication and response that takes place in relationships, happens without leaving the aloneness of solitude.

In 1956, when I met with Krishnamurti, he asked me: "I have heard you have stayed in the Himalayas; you went to Amarkantak and did your Sadhana." I replied: "Yes, I went in my holidays". "What experience did you have?" "This is the kind of experience I had: that the peace was heavy and now the peace is light."

There was a great advantage in staying in the cave, for if I had not gone into that solitude and had not sat for hours at a time in jaap or silence or solitude, then this special point, may have eluded me. I may not have been able to catch it.

Meeting With Saints

Sitaram Das Maharaj

Sitaram Das Maharaj was a great Yogi and known to Vimalaji's grandfather. Vimalaji learnt Yoga Asanas from him when she was still a child. He was a good friend of Sant Tukroji Maharaj.

When I was seven-years old, we went in the summer to my grandfather's home. My grandfather knew a Swami living in Amarkanta in Mandala who had mastered the Khejaree Mudra or was a Siddha Khejaree Mudra Yogi. This Yogi was known to my grandfather's family for five generations and had given them all Hatha Yoga Diksha.

Grandfather took us to the Yogi's Ashram when I was seven years old. Many times after that I visited the ashram with Tukroji Maharaj and with Satimai.

I learnt Asanas from Swamiji, who was at that time more than 125 years old. (He was 150 years old when I took him to Bombay to have his cataract eye operation. With the help of Chandraben and Vasubhai Parekh we got the operation done. In 1969, he died at the age of 162.)

I learnt a lot from Swamiji. He explained a lot about Patanjali Yoga Sutras. I didn't understand everything then, but was introduced to Yoga Shastra there.

Swamiji used to call me at times 'Bandariya' (monkey) and at other times 'Narmadamaya' (Mother of Narmada River). When Swamiji called me for puja or for arti I wouldn't go, instead I would climb up a tree. He brought the prasad to me in the tree, and would say: "Take it Bandariya." Sitting in the tree, I would eat the prasad. I was very stubborn – not with others - but with Saints. The relationship with Sitaram Das Maharaj grew over the years.

Anandmai Ma

After the metric exam, I was returning from Kota, where I had gone with friends, and I went to meet Anandmai Ma. I had in mind to take Sanyas from Anandmai Ma. I did not want to take Sanyas from a male, so I went to Anandmai Ma.

Ma said:" Oh yes, you want to take Sanyas? Is Sanyas in clothes? It is inside you. Go home, study, it will awake from inside. You want Sanyas no? It will happen, but it must come from within." She took my father's address from me, sent him a telegram saying that your daughter is with me, don't worry. Ma kept me for three days.

Meher Baba

Meher Baba's Ashram was near Ahmednagar. There was a professor of Maurice College called Deshmukh. He was very forgetful by nature, but he was a devotee of Meher Baba. Meher Baba came once to Nagpur and as I used to sing bhajaans well, I was called to meet him.

We entered a room where forty people were sitting and my Professor led me to Meher Baba. (His secretary was Adi Irani.) I was asked to sing, and after I sang five bhajaans, I asked: "Can I go?" Baba said: "Bring this girl inside." My Professor was happy and thought Baba's grace is on her. I said to him: "I will only go inside if you are there, as I don't know these people."

Meher Baba was a very beautiful-looking person. He was a Parsi and since twelve years he had not spoken.

We went inside and I noticed a special board. Meher Baba would move his fingers on the board and Irani sahib would tell me what he was saying.

Baba said: "I am very glad to see you," and I replied: "It is God's grace that you are pleased with me". Baba continued: "In your mukti there is not much time left; you are on the threshold of enlightenment. Now you say, I will realize myself with the help of Meher Baba." I replied: "I will not say that, if you say I am on the threshold of realization, if it is God's wish, it will happen, why should I say it? If you want to help, help." Professor said: "Baba is offering to help you". I said: "I will not say what he asks." I did not want freedom through conditions. Irani sahib was upset; Professor was upset.

I got up and asked: "Can I go?" He said "No". He used to eat milk and rice and he asked for it. He made me sit close to him at the table, and with his hand put five teaspoonfuls in my mouth. I was so scared wondering if there was anything in it that might put me to sleep, but there was nothing in it. Dada used to say such cautiousness is good in youth, and that your sharpness is your protection

After he fed me five times, he gave a message to Adi Irani and Professor Sahib to tell my parents. The message was that he was about to leave on a world tour and he wanted to take me with him. Her spiritual status is very great. I did not say anything because I did not want to go.

The incident ended there in one way, and in another way it did not. When we had Diwali holidays and I went home, the day after I arrived home, Dharnidhar C. Deshmukh and Adi Irani came to Akola to meet my parents and to offer a proposal. They explained that it is Baba's great wish to take Vimala with him on his world tour. She has a great right to move around, to see things. Father asked me: "What is your wish?" I said: "I have no wish at all." Mother asked: "You have no attraction to see the world or travel around the world?" and I said: "Even if there is the attraction, I don't want to go like this, with someone."

His letters would keep coming every few months for a couple of years. He had an Ashram in Ahmednagar and called me there to Mehernagar. I did not go there, and so the relationship did not develop or go any further. He had opened an Ashram there for masto (for those who don't have body consciousness but are living in God intoxication) to bring those Sadhak there in that state and serve them.

Tukroji Maharaj

Among all the Saints (living saints) Vimalaji met, the one who seemed to have had the greatest influence on Vimalaji during her growing years was Tukroji Maharaj. He was known to Vimalaji's maternal grandfather and to her mother too. From childhood he kept an eye on Vimalaji and later on in life when she left home. Though Vimalaji never made anyone her guru there was much she learnt from him and there were always fond memories.

Tukroji Maharaj was a child saint. During his childhood he ran away from school and would wander around singing bhajans. In his wanderings one day he came to Vimalaji's *grandfather's mansion and her grandfather immediately recognised his spiritual status and offered him a place to stay in his own home. There are many miraculous tales of those days. During the freedom struggle he took an active part and was imprisoned and sentenced to death, Gandhiji did all he could to get him freed. Even in jail he would sing his bhajans and people would collect outside the prison to hear them and join in. He was in the same prison as Vinoba Bhave who taught him to read and write. Mahatma Gandhi declared him as the National Saint.*

First Meeting with Tukroji Maharaj

I had gone to Bhandara (where my aunt and uncle were living) and was running Abhinav Bharat Vidyalaya (school) to earn money for my college fees. I was earning money so that I could sit for my Master of Arts examination. Maharaj came there, and Chachi and Nani (my aunt and grandmother), wanted to meet him and told me to come along. I said: "I will not go, as he is not a Brahman." At that time I had a great pride in being a Brahman. "I won't go there, I won't eat his prasad, I won't wear any mala he may offer." Chachi and Nani said: "Don't worry about these things, but at least come with us." So I went with them and sat in the car while they went in for Darshan

Maharaj said: "Why is the one who is fighting sitting outside? Call her in." So a person, Tukaram dada came to call me. As I went in, Maharaj got up, stood by the door and said: "Come Bhudev, you will not have to touch the feet. I know how to respect Brahman tattva. He gave me an asana at his level to sit on and said: "Here you will not have to do any namaskar, eat choota – or wear any mala. You have come to fight, then fight."

I was taken aback; I wondered how he knew my thoughts. I knew grandmother or aunty would not have told him. He said: "What did you want to fight about?" I said:" I won't fight or talk with you, because it seems you have an art, otherwise how else would you know what I had in my mind. Unless I also obtain that art, I won't talk with you."

After that our relationship grew. I went with him to Navadeep, Kholapur, and Indore. My uncle, who used to stay with us, was his friend from childhood. He used to come home, but I never used to go to him. I was not interested in such things. I would say: "What is he going to say? Can he say anything more than what is written in the Upanishads? Who will say more than what Shankaracharya, Vivekananda, and Ram Tirth have said?"

Pandarpur Bhajan

Pandarpur is a very sacred pilgrimage spot in Maharashtra, and every year in the monsoons devotees do a padyatra from Gyaneshwar's Samadhi at Alandi to Pandarpur the abode of Lord Krishna. All along the way, they sing bhajans and danced. Many devotees make it a point of going on this pilgrimage every year. Enroute they are fed and looked after at no charge. It is always at the same time before the full moon of Kartiki.

Every year at Ashaadi and Kartiki Ekadashi and full moon, Maharaja's Bhajans would take place in Pandarpur, in the midst of lakhs of people.

I had done Pandarpur ki Varkariyo ki Vari with Maharaj and also with Sonapanth Dandekar. I had done the pilgrimage many times before that, with my Nanaji (grandfather). I had been from Alandi to Pandarpur on Padyatra with thousands of Varkaris dancing, jumping, singing bhajans. They used to play on the small kartal , musical instrument played in Maharashtra, and they played the Manjira.

On one occasion, Tukroji Maharaj got typhoid during the time of the pilgrimage, and therefore, there was no chance of his going for the Aashadi bhajaan. He called me to him at Sarasvati Satibai Shukla's house in Nagpur. "Vimal, this time you will have to go and sing the Bhajans in my place." I said: "How can that be? There are two to three lakhs of people there. I never sang Bhajans in the presence of such a large gathering."

He said: "You go and sit; the Bhajans will be sung on their own." I replied: "How will the others accept it? – Bhandan Maharaj, Dhanda Maharaj, Chaturvasya Maharaj and all the people of Pandarpur, how will they accept this change?" He said: "That anxiety you leave to me."

I got quite anxious. How will it be?

He said: "My Bhajani Mandal (accompaniment of singers and musicians) will go with you. You don't have to play the Khanjari (musical instrument used during singing bhajans). My sathi (accompanist) will play it. You have to sing the bhajans and you have to give a talk."

He gave me coconut, put rupees eleven in my hand, did a tilak, and patted me on the back the Pandarpur way (Pandarpur ka buka). Maharaj with great insistence sent me off from Nagpur.

We went to Pandarpur. Until then they did not let anyone make an announcement that Maharaj will not be coming. There were about two and half to three lakh (3,00,000) devotees there, maybe even more than three lakh people. The Vyas Peeth, stage, was twenty-five feet high. My legs were trembling but with the words of Maharaj, I went to the stage, sat there and the Bhajaan took place. I gave a talk and lots of people liked it.

Miracle at Tukroji Maharaj Ashram

I was at Tukroji Maharaj's Ashram on one occasion when we were celebrating his Guru's Puniya Tithi. There was a feast and about one thousand devotees had eaten and gone. About 150 volunteers were left to eat, when suddenly another group of 150 devotees came to partake of the feast. Maharaj said: "Lay the leaves," but I replied: "There is sufficient food only for another fifty people, not more." He assured me: "Guru Prasad can never fall short." I said: "Come and look for yourself; it is really only enough to feed fifty people," and he repeated: "You first lay the leaves."

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Maharaj came into the kitchen and opened all the lids of the pots. There was khichadee, vegetables and fried red chilli. He served the chilli, I served the vegetables and another boy served the khichadee. After we fed 150 devotees, the food in the pot remained as it was before. Maharaj said: "Vimal your education through books will not come to use here". After the group had finished eating, all of us volunteers sat down to eat at midnight, and Maharaj served us, even then the pots were not empty.

This is what I have seen with my own eyes.

Maharaj said there is no need to give such incidences any importance but by the Grace of Guru such things happen.

Another Incident with Tukroji Maharaj

Maharaj took us to Navadeep. There were fourteen people with him and he used to make me to do the cooking. I fed everyone and he said: "There is no food for you. One day, two days, three days went by like this; then I began to feel weak. He would make me do the cooking and take me everywhere with him but not let me eat, only drink water.

We returned to Calcutta and stayed at a rich man's house. We reached the house close to midnight. I was very angry that I was not allowed to eat for three days so I closed the door from inside and went to sleep. After more than an hour, Baba called me to wake up and come to eat. I said: "We can not eat at 1.30 in the night." I finally got up and saw a big thal with lots of different foods had been prepared.

Maharaj had an odd way of eating; he would mix up everything: dhal, rice, vegetables, chutney, ladoo. He made five ladoos from the food and the first ladoo he fed me with his own hands. I asked:"How can I eat such a big ladoo? I have not eaten for three days." But he insisted and I ate the ladoo. After eating, I went back to my room. He locked the door from outside. I woke up the next day in the evening. Nothing was wrong with me.

I did not understand what he had done. I told him: "I will not go again with you." He replied: "So you think you came of your own wish?"

Babaji Maharaj

I got many prizes in Inter-Collegiate Debates, in Inter-University debates. Now in one Inter University Debate an incident took place.

This incident took place in Jabalpur. In Robertson College, Jabalpur there were inter-university debates on a regular basis. The principal there was s friend of the Principal of Sitabai Arts College. Akola. We were staying at his home. I forgot the name of the principal but his Guru was Babaji Maharaj of Lodhi Khirke near Nagpur. That year at the time of the debate, Maharaj was also there.

Before that, I had won twice the All India Trophy extempore, and in elocution competition I had taken a few prizes. As a result many students were quite angry with me. Maybe you remember in Parliament there was a member from Calcutta, Bhupesh Gupta; he also came to the debates. There was the prince of Alwar; he kept coming to the Debates. Because people were angry, there was effort to poison me.

In the first competition my number wasn't called. After that competition, there was a break and during the break, while I was having a conversation, somebody put a cup of tea in my hand. I may have swallowed two sips from the cup, when I saw Babaji Maharaj come walking towards me very briskly. I was taking a third sip, when he took the cup and threw it away. He called for water and from his bag took out something, put it in the water and made me drink it. I said: "What has happened? Why are you making me drink this medicine?" He replied: "You will know everything later, now quietly drink the medicine. After your talk is over, come home and I will tell you." On drinking the medicine, I vomited three times and saw that the vomit was green. Later he told me there was poison in the tea.

How did Babaji know what had happened sitting at home? I don't know. He was sitting at home doing his Jaap and suddenly he knew about the poison.

Babaji was fond of me and often looked after me. He even used to come to Nagpur. (In Nagpur my philosophy professor, C.D.Deshmukh who was a devotee of Meher Baba, was also connected with Babaji Maharaj.)

After Babaji saved me, I participated in the debate and even won a trophy. When I went home in the evening Babaji said to me: "Look, in the morning I told you I will do a tilak for you, and you refused". (Before I had gone out in the morning I had been to meet him to do Namaskar.) I said: "Do a small tilak; don't do a big one, I have to give a talk." He asked me: "What if I do a big one, what will you do?" I had replied: " I will wipe it off when I go outside". He replied, "You are spoilt. Go, I am not going to do the tilak".

In the evening he commented: "Look if I had done the tilak ....." and I asked: "What if you had done it; does it mean that I would not have been poisoned?" "See, I saved her, and she is fighting with me like this." And I said: "Besides you and the other saints I meet, who else is there in the world to fight with? Only you are there."

I am the child of saints. They have looked after me and brought me up. My body was born somewhere, and the saints looked after it.

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Chapter Three

Contributing to the Development of Women

The Light Will Not Be Stifled

An elegant model,
of a strong, self-sufficient inquirer
in a woman's body,
who maintains
positive female qualities
while uplifting
the lives of other women.

Avadhoot Are We!

-We are Avadhoot – Avadhoot are we!
In a female body
See for yourself
Our Avadhooti is of by-gone centuries
It is even before the Rishis of the Vedas
We are Avadhoot – Avadhoot are we!

The Universe is contained in this body
The Universal Mother
is contained in our heart
We are Avadhoot – Avadhoot are we!

We are in the guise of an individual
But are in essence the pure universe
In a female body
We are Narayan
We are Avadhoot – Avadhoot are we!

... *Vimala*

Chapter Three

Contributing to the Development of Women

The Light Will Not Be Stifled

INTRODUCTION

Vimalaji's life has been a beam of clear light showing the way for others, a source of strength enabling others to have courage and stand tall. This light is clearly manifested in the way she has demonstrated how in spite of being born in a woman's body, in spite of living in an orthodox society like in India, one can uphold one's principles and live one's understanding,

In this life Vimalaji took birth in a woman's body, it seems for a very specific purpose. Through her own life, she showed how an enquirer can be in a woman's body and yet attain enlightenment, can be in a woman's body and with courage can defy all social norms and customs and continue the *spiritual search. One can be in a woman's body and not follow the set customs of society of getting married and becoming a householder or taking a job, but one can live in society, serve society and yet take care of oneself, maintaining one's independence, self-respect and self-esteem.*

Later on in life when enquirers would come to Vimalaji for guidance, she often made the point that in this life she is available for woman enquirers who can benefit from the proximity of an enlightened one. Otherwise it was nearly impossible in an Indian society, where most of the enlightened ones in the past were in male bodies.

Through numerous examples Vimalaji showed how a woman can live as an equal to her male counterparts and contribute to society.

We will see how in her youth, her firmness and determination not to follow the old customs and norms of society led her into much suffering and hardships but she went through all of them without giving up or going back on her understanding. Vimalaji was determined "to be recognised as a human being in a female body".

Vimalaji's life as we see it unfold is a perfect example of living the understanding no matter what the cost or the price one has to pay for it. All that Vimalaji was to share with enquirers in later life was built on the foundation of living experience – they were not just empty shells of words or something borrowed.

From the life lived, the understanding came, and then only was shared.

Non-Sexual Consciousness

Vimalaji's consciousness was sex-free. Saints and enlightened beings with whom Vimalaji came into contact, observed that, and were amazed that it was a quality of consciousness from birth.

I had a feeling of non-sex consciousness even in my teenage years when the energy of youth spread throughout my body. The energy of youth impregnated the whole body; in every cell of the body it was awakening. The fragrance of youth was enjoyed, but sex-consciousness never came up or was aroused, nor did it create a blockage or a knot.

I did not know when youth came upon this body, or when it quieted down from the point of sex consciousness, but there was gentleness, equal friendship with males and females, through out the whole life.

Intoxication or divine intoxication was there but not sex-consciousness. Some people said it is true that my

Brahmachari was from birth (Janma siddha). It could be so, I cannot say.

Sex and Ego Consciousness

I feel that ego and sex consciousness move together. They are the two sides or aspects of the 'I' consciousness. Like two halves of a shell of dhal stay together, so sex-consciousness and ego-consciousness are two parts of one consciousness. Neither of these troubled me. This is Life's great grace.

Right from childhood, I had awareness of wholeness as a human being. I had not studied, at that time, any Chinese literature suggesting that there is male and female within each one of us. But I did have a feeling of wholeness. I would not deny, however, my female qualities that come with a female body.

The consciousness was non-sexual and it remained that way. When I was studying and after my studies, in spite of doing so much work in society, there was never any sexual sensation arising in the body. If it was not there in the chitta, it was not there in the body. I observed very carefully. Even in my youth I observed very carefully. There was never a sensation arising – not in the consciousness nor in the body – it never happened.

There wasn't any interest in following the social customs for girls. It was the custom that when a male friend visits that one should dress up, sit carefully, talk in a special way or give some special attention to the male friend. This I did not do. When boys were around, I felt no need to stand and talk with them in a different, self-conscious way. There was no difference in my behavior towards girls and boys. There was no difference in my consciousness between male and female.

Youth came and went in this body but there was no difference in the state of consciousness. I have been saying that the Divine captured my heart, captured my eyes, what could I do? I was never attracted to anything of the world.

Because there was no sex consciousness it did not mean that in life there was any feeling of lack nor was there any poverty of feelings, or any kind of perversion. I did have the conditioning to live properly, to eat properly. My grandfather was very fond of good living. He had different kinds of attars (essential oils). I also have attar, keep my clothes clean and well ironed, eat only twice a day but in a proper way. I have aesthetic tendencies; some call it bourgeois, elitist tendencies, aristocratic tendencies.

I would like to mention one more point. In adolescence, when in the life of a woman, in the body of a female, the monthly cycle begins (it began in my life when I was eighteen), I never had any difficulty with it. During the menses period one was not supposed to do any heavy work – physically or mentally – this one guideline or rule I followed.

Even that period in a woman's life that is called menopause, passed with ease and spontaneity. There was no imbalance or restlessness.

In a woman's life these are important occurrences, and both these occurrences took place easily and effortlessly. Their coming and leaving were easy. Both my Vaidyas, Balubhai Vaidya and Gajanananda Vaidya, said that in the light of Ayurveda, it is a rare thing to see.

Vinobaji used to say about me: "This is our Vivekanand. In a woman's body she is Vivekananda. He accepted that sex consciousness was not present in my life. Tukroji Maharaj, Sitaramdas Maharaj, Dada Dharmadhikari, Gopinath Kaviraj also accepted it, acknowledged it in various ways. But when Tukroji Maharaj said the same thing about the lack of sex consciousness, I did not understand it, I did not realise its importance.

This one incredible thing my mother could never understand. My father having read Ram Tirth could appreciate and respect it. Tukroji Maharaj explained to my mother: "See Akasahib, in my heart there comes one moment of attraction for the things, and that very moment becomes the moment of absence of desire, but your daughter she does not have that."

I used to feel why are they making such a big thing out of non-sex consciousness? Why are they giving it so much importance? At that time I was not able to correlate it with the whole of life. I used to laugh it off. What a fuss they are making! They are exaggerating. Today I can understand that living in society without taking any vows, living with all sorts of people, mixing with everyone freely, and remaining in the state of spontaneity, is an unusual event.

I felt that the state of Brahmachari is not to be lived by taking a vow. A vow is necessary if there is no control, no discipline. If taking a vow helps to bring about discipline, then it would no longer be necessary to take the vow. If the state of Brahmachari can be there without taking vows, well and good.

Medical Check-Up

When I completed Inter examination and came home to Akola, my mother was worried. She asked herself, "Could it be that this girl is abnormal; she does not behave like other girls. She is not interested in any of the things other girls are interested in - neither clothes nor jewellery."

When I was young, my family made me wear a necklace of mani beads – bor mala they called it. I used to chew the necklace with my teeth and keep all the beads in match boxes. I didn't like it, if they made me wear clothes of Jari – cloth woven with golden threads. I tore up the clothes. But I did like reading about Ram Tirth and Swami Vivekananda

So mother took me to a lady doctor to have a medical check-up to find out if I were abnormal. The doctor reported that I was completely normal. My mother still wondered about my consciousness.

Non-Attachment

Vimalaji had no attachment to the body. From Vimalaji's description we get an idea of what a high level of sensitivity she has even towards human contact and touch. There were close friends whom Vimalaji chided for their attachment to her.

I think a colleague had a great attachment for me. I would say to him:"This is your attachment; you are very fond of patting people on the back, patting them on the head. Why can't you express your love without touching?" No matter who came to visit, whether male or female, he would do the same thing. He was very fond of touching people to express his affection.

Today I call it an attachment, but then I used poetic expression: "Gyaneshwar Maharaj has said that the Chakor bird drinks the nectar from the moon, where does he go to touch it? Where is the moon and where is the Chakor?" And I added: "The ocean rises at the sight of the moon; where does it go to touch the moon? Why can't there be love without touch, and wisdom, knowledge without speech? Why are you fond of that? Why do you talk so much?" In the end I had to say: "I think you have an attachment for Vimala. What you call love, I do not think it is love; it is attachment."

I had to face this kind of attachment. It was not necessarily male and female attachment, but there can be an attachment to the physical body. If you have an attachment for another's body, you can be sure that you have an attachment for your own body. Unless you consider your own body as a means for pleasure, you can never make another person's body a means of pleasure.

So I have had to face this habit some people have of touching, the attachment to touch. With such people I would do namaskar from a distance, but I noticed many people especially young girls and even boys like friendly pats on the back.

Even from childhood, I never had a need for expressing love through touch, nor did I have the wish to receive a touch from anyone. The meeting of Atman was for me so real, I felt that meeting can take place through sight. If we can meet through sight then what more do we want? Is there not a touch through presence? Presence has its own language; it has its own vibrations similar to the vibrations of touch. So I had to face other peoples' attachments to physical bodies and touch.

Equality of Education

In India during the pre-Independence and post - Independence days, girls were not encouraged to study. There were very few opportunities for the girls. The custom was for girls to get married, stay at home and look after the house. Vimalaji was a revolutionary and rebel and braving all odds was determined to study what she wanted.

I had a great love for study so I used to be a first-class student. I would come first and get scholarships. My brothers were good boys, but they were not so fond of studying. So when I came first in my class and got praise from my father, my brothers would later all pounce on me and say: "Why don't you study less? Why do you get first class? In front of you, we have no value. Then only you become beloved of father. Why do you get first class?"

I was fond of music, and I was fond of taking part in plays and dramas. This enthusiasm for music and drama never left me, even when I was in high school. In school, a drama never took place without me.

I enjoyed, also, participating in sports. My school friend Sarla, now Sarla Birla and I would participate in whatever games there were in our school. Either she was the captain and I was the secretary, or I was the captain and she was the secretary. So we played volleyball, basketball, khoko. Our khoko team was well known through out the CP & Biral area. We used to take the whole team to sporting events.

So I would participate in school games, in drama. In drama I have taken so many different roles. Even in college there was no drama without me whether it was in English or Marathi. So when people ask me: "How is it when you are talking, you describe things so well?" It is because I used to work in plays, dramas, so I can vocalize different personalities. I don't remember the different roles I acted.

As I mentioned earlier, my father never discriminated among his sons and daughters in educating them. If he took the boys out to teach them swimming, he would also take me. In Ramdas playground, there were classes in drill for boys; my father and his friends would also organise classes for the girls. He used to say: "What difference does it make if the child is a boy or a girl?"

There was this freedom and equality of the sexes in my childhood. I did not need to read any books by Gandhi or Karl Marx to understand this freedom and equality; it was in the home. In the home there was an atmosphere of fearlessness and openness and freedom.

I took full interest in life, not only in philosophy and in the essence of things. I took part in a full range of extra-curricular activities.

I will tell you another story. Pitaji was fond of classical music. Just as Dada could play tabla, my father also played tabla well. Govindrao Tende, a friend of my father, used to play the harmonium very well. When he came into town he would take father to accompany him. In the town there was a communist leader by the name of Godbole Vakil, and many people used to meet at his house for music programs. Once Shanta Apte was invited to give a program there. I wanted to attend but was told: "No ladies were to come". I said: "What is this? Ladies will get spoilt by listening to music and you won't get spoilt?" So I went to Godbole Vakil's house from the back door and told Mrs. Godbole: "I'll help you make tea." I stood near the door and heard the musical recitation for an hour and a half.

I have done a lot of mischief of this sort, or heard that I used to do it.

The only restriction we had at home was not being allowed to read novels. When I went to Women's Hostel, there were novels in the library. One of my roommates was a Muslim girl called Mansoor. She was from Botru taluka, and I was from Akola. Mansoor Nisha Begam was very fond of novels. She used to pull away the book I was reading and put a novel in front of me.

Because of Mansoor I read some good novels during college days. I also read English novels. There was a Bengali girl, Banerjee, at the hostel, and because of her I read novels by Sharad Babu (a famous novelist of Bengal). She gave the Hindi translation to me, so I read them.

There used to be four cots in one room. At night Didi, (we would call Miss Banerjee 'Didi'), Mansoor and myself would huddle up on her bed, and she used to read novels to us. We loved to listen to her. She read so well, that we used to think the character would come off the pages in front of us.

Sharad Babu used to create such an atmosphere, a special world that as long as we were reading his books, we could not get out of that world. We also read Ravibabu's (Ravindranath Tagore) books and poems.

Choosing Independence

Earning and Learning

After B.A., there was great pressure on the part of my grandmother and my maternal aunt and, to some extent, from my mother to arrange a marriage for me. I didn't want to get married. Even mother wanted me to stop studying and to be married. She said to me: "Why study further? Stop studying further."

As my father had no relatives, my maternal aunts were very influential in the family. My maternal aunts were highly articulate; they came to Akola and announced: "No more studying. As it is she is very bold, so let us get her married." And I said, "I won't get married." Their reply was, "What is this, we're to spend money on your education and on your marriage?" I replied "Up to now I have not taken any money from you for my education, and I won't take any money from you now either, from now on I will study on my own resources. Now you need not spend money on my studies or my clothes, but I will continue my studies."

Most of my education was through scholarships. When I was studying Marathi, after I passed fourth class, I received Rs. 8/- scholarship, and when I came first in the eighth class entrance exam I was given Rs. 20/-

scholarship, and after passing matriculation Rs. 50/- scholarship. In Intermediate I had a Rs. 75/- scholarship. This is the way I studied up to B.A. After passing matriculation, I received a Prince of Biral scholarship of Rs.50.00 from the Nizam's son, so I was able to attend Women's College in Nagpur. The scholarship was given only for study in the Women's College.

So I went to Women's College, received a scholarship and passed Inter. But then a difficulty came up. The principal would not let us participate in the Inter-College Debates, because boys used to participate in those debates. She said: "You are not to go to the debates." So I replied, "You keep your scholarship to yourself, I am leaving."

I went to Akola, where a new college, Sitabai Arts College, had recently opened. Mother questioned me: "You left your scholarship and you will now study here?" I replied, "Morning and evening I will give tuitions and will study." So in the morning I gave one tuition and in the evening I gave another tuition. The college was three miles away from home, and I was able to bicycle to college.

I did B.A. in Akola. After completing the B.A., I wanted to study for M.A., but there was no arrangement for M.A. in Akola; so I went to Nagpur.

In Nagpur there was a professor, Yadav Mukund Pathak, who ran a Ladies Hostel. I explained my situation to him, and suggested a way I could pay for a room in the hostel. I said to him: "By giving tuitions for six months, I will be able to earn money and pay for a room, so let me stay here." I got a small room.

Each day, I would cook my meal in the morning, leave it there, and go by bicycle to give one tuition. Then I went to Maurice College and studied. I had a cup of tea in the college canteen and then went to the library to make notes. After studying in the library, I gave a second tuition and then went back to the hostel. At the hostel, I warmed-up the food I prepared in the morning. I could afford to eat only once a day.

Starting a School in Bhandara

Though Vimalaji wanted to earn money for her higher education, the means she chose was service in the field of education. Even here the approach was novel. For example if the children did not listen or would misbehave instead of punishing them, Vimalaji would tell them they would have to punish her, for the failure was hers and not theirs. This had a great effect on the children and without further scolding started behaving themselves.

I studied in Maurice College and stayed in a hostel, for one year, but didn't have sufficient money to continue. I left college and went to Bhandara where my aunt and uncle were staying. I started a small school in Bhandara called Abhinav Bharat Vidyala (School for a New India) with the help of my aunt and uncle. I ran the school for two years. We had three classes: ninth, tenth and eleventh. In the first year, all twelve girls in the school passed the final exams. Six girls passed in first class, and six passed in second class.

The school inspector at that time, Florence Timothy, was the same person who taught in Girls High School in Akola. She had been my English teacher and had great affection for me. She came to check on the school and was a great help to me. Later on she married a Muslim and was Florence Choudhury. She still keeps in touch with me and I receive her letters from Raipur.

During this time, two teachers and I lived in a mud hut. We plastered the walls of the hut with cow dung. We cooked a meal once a day and instead of a second meal, ate only channa and peanuts. In this way we saved money. For two years, I ate only one meal a day.

Returning to College

After earning money for college, I returned to Nagpur to Maurice College. With the money I had saved and money earned by giving two tuitions daily, I went through college. Some lectures were in Hyslop College and some in Maurice College. I was able to complete a M.A. in Philosophy.

There was not much free time in my student days, but when Pandit Omkar Nath Thakur (a famous musician, who later became very fond of Vimalaji) came, I would go to listen to his music.

In high school and in college, I had taken part in many debates and had a huge collection of trophies. I went to Inter-Collegiate Debates and Inter-University Debates and received prizes from all over India. When I wanted to go on to higher studies, I sold all those trophies and used the money to buy books. In this way I was able to complete my studies.

The six years I spent in educating myself were very, very difficult years of hardship, and there was a lot of injustice done to the body.

Marriage Offers

Apart from the rigors of leaving home to earn and learn, Vimalaji also went through the embarrassment young women in India have to go through when they reach marriageable age and suitors come to meet them. Vimalaji, though a sensitive young girl, went through all that in a very robust way, even coming up with some novel ideas and approaches, which were not too well taken or appreciated by the interested suitors

When the question of marriage would come up, I'd say: "Me and marriage? I can never be married! How can I be married, when I am a Sanyasi?"

Yet there was an effort to get me married on the part of my mother and my grandmother and I had to face that. It was a hard struggle all the way. If there were not the rebel in me that demanded to be recognized as a human being in a female body, I would not have been able to go through it.

From the age of fourteen, I decided I did not wish to get married. That created a friction between my mother, who could not understand it, and myself.

There was only one preoccupation, one dhoon, in the chitta. From the age of seven, I used to say: "My eyes have been robbed by God. Who is He? Where is He? What is He like? Don't ask me. He has been merged into my eyes. He has stolen my heart. I have to live in the universe built by Him. I have to serve the universe built by Him. More than this I have no relation with the world."

When I would talk like this, my mother would reply: "There is no need to go into all these explanations; you need only to say you don't want to get married!" I would insist: "No, I should let people know why".

When the word got around that I didn't want to get married - even the teachers in school knew and even the neighbours knew - people looked at me in an odd way. I felt that human society, wherever I go, keeps evaluating me, and so I withdrew within myself. This feeling lasted till 1962.

One day my grandmother, aunt or mother became very angry with me because I was not ready to listen to them and get married, so I thought to myself: "What is the use of living like this; come on, let me commit suicide. These people will keep troubling me and even father will be hurt. I don't want to marry, don't want to have a householder's life, don't want to take a job. What will I do and how will I live?" So I had decided, when everyone is asleep, I will go to the river and jump in.

It was summer time and everyone was sleeping outside, all the cots were outside. I wrote a note to my parents and put it under my pillow.

When everyone was asleep, I was planning to get up and go to the river. Then I heard the noise of wooden sandals. It was as if somebody wearing wooden sandals was moving around my bed. If I opened my eyes, I could not see anyone; it was a moonlit night but I could not see anyone. When I closed my eyes again, I could hear the sound of wooden sandals. This went on for almost two hours. Somebody wanted to prevent me from going to the river. That noise of the wooden sandals prevented me from moving, and after a couple of hours either out of a sense of defeat or exhaustion, I went to sleep. The next morning on waking, I tore up the note.

Father used to tell my mother: "Don't insist on her getting married. Let her do what she wants to." And Ma would reply: "Can a Brahman girl remain without getting married? And if any of these quacks fool her - she is so straightforward, she trusts everyone - what will happen to her? There is no cautiousness in her! If she were a clever girl, I would not worry, but she is so innocent she trusts everyone. What will happen to her?"

My father had trust in me and would say: "This girl will find her own way; she is not going to get married." Father had faith in me.

Grandmother worried when I turned fifteen and still was not thinking about marriage. All the time the women in the family were busy planning and arranging for a match. After metric my grandmother, and my elder aunt came to Akola to begin plans for marriage.

Suitors Become Brothers

Boys in college, who were interested in me, would make offers for marriage. It was hard refusing their offers.

I often went to the Inter-University Debates and won prizes, and as a result there were thoughts in the minds of many boys that they would like to marry this girl. In parliament there was a blind M.P. from Bengal, Bhoopesh Gupta, if I remember correctly, during his college days he would come to the debates representing Calcutta University. Then from Alwar, Raj Kumar, the prince of Alwar, came for the debates. Some of the boys became attracted to me and wrote letters making proposals for marriage.

As soon as a letter from a boy would come, I would read it to my parents. If I received the letter while I was studying in college and living in a hostel, I would reply to the letter. When I went to Akola, I would show my parents the letter and say: "See this is the reply I have written".

Sometimes in a reply to a boy I would suggest: "On this particular date in your holidays, you can come to Akola." Many boys came to Akola, and I would keep Rakhis ready. *(The custom of tying Rakhi has deep meaning for Indian youth, for once a Rakhi is tied by a girl to a boy, he* *becomes her brother, and throughout their life he accepts that role of a brother and protector.)* To each boy who came I said: "You would like to have a connection with me, and there is one relationship that is possible. As I don't want to make you sad, I am offering this: I will tie a Rakhi on your wrist. I have no desire for marriage, no attraction for marriage; I don't feel the need for it. If you want a close place in my life, then I can offer you a Rakhi on your wrist."

Mum would say: "Don't do that, you will get into trouble. Don't do all this. A boy wanting to get married is not going to be satisfied by you tying a Rakhi on him. A boy wants to get married to you, and you want to make him a brother?" I replied: "Is this not better, instead of having absolutely no connection?"

Some boys accepted, came to Akola and let me tie the Rakhi. I had tied Rakhi on the wrist of the prince of Alwar. When years later (in the days of Bhoodan), I went to Alwar, his wife tied a golden Rakhi on my wrist saying: "You used to tie so many Rakhis on your brother; today I will tie a Rakhi to you."

But one boy became very angry: "You have called me here to insult me?" I replied: "No, what is there to be insulted about? I thought you want to have some kind of relationship with me; if not that, than this." He said: "Something is wrong with your brain." I said: "Nothing is wrong, thank you."

Some boys wrote angry letters to my parents, and even later wrote nasty letters to the newspapers about me. But mother had warned me. Now I can understand; then I did not understand how it could be an insult. My mother used to say "One day you will get into trouble. Those who want to get married to you don't write them such letters."

Today I can laugh at what happened; at that time I could not understand. Two of the boys became my enemies; they became so angry with me that they spread malicious gossip. This did not create any feeling of animosity in my mind towards them; I just felt a great deal of compassion for them.

This was India forty years ago, seeped in its old traditions. It was only after independence that, with the insistence of Gandhiji, women received equal franchise.

Pressure to Marry

One day grandmother got so upset with me that she announced: "Until you agree to get married, we will not let you out of your room." She locked the room from the outside. My family brought me two meals each day in the room and I said: "I am very grateful to you. Now for one month I will be able to study really well."

I never needed another human being for conversation. I stayed alone with great joy reading Tukaram's Gatha, Samarth's Das Bodh, Eknath's Bhagwat, and books by Vivekananda and Ram Tirth. I never felt any lack. Even now, I enjoy human company, but if there is nobody there, I don't feel lonely. I do not feel: "Oh, nobody is there, what will I do?' Life is there, the Universe is there. One lives with the plants, the flowers, the trees, the birds that come to drink the water. From morning to night there is such a joy in seeing the different shades of the trees. The company of the trees is not less than the company of human beings. One gets a lot of joy from that and from watching the sky.

Once when I was in college, my family called me from Nagpur. (I was studying on scholarship in Women's College at Nagpur.) I received a telegram: "Mother is in serious condition, come immediately". So I went home and was surprised to find Ma doing well. I saw her cooking a meal. Mum's eldest sister was there, and she said: "Don't make a fuss, but we have called you because someone is coming from Alwar to meet you; don't make a commotion. Bapusahib doesn't know we have called you; we have hidden it from him. Chandrika doesn't listen and even Vakil sahib doesn't listen, so we called you". I said: "Ok".

On the day of the arranged meeting, my aunt made me wear a nine-meter sari (type of sari worn in Maharashtra) and dressed me up. Father was wondering why I didn't say anything, why I didn't make a fuss.

The potential suitor and his uncle called on me, and they asked me to serve tea to them. I was asked to recite poetry in English, then in Hindi, then to sing a song. They were very happy and said: "If this Laxmi (Goddess of wealth) comes to our house, we will be happy", so from a bag they took out a packet of penda - milk sweet, in the shape of a shell and rupees 1.25 as a sign of acceptance. They took it out of the bag and called me: "Come here". I said: "I won't come. Have your questions come to an end?" "Yes." "Now I want to ask you some questions?" "You will ask questions?" "Yes, and I'll ask the boy sitting here."

I asked: "Does your son know who made this universe? Does he know what our relationship with Him is? Does he know what is death, what happens after death? If he doesn't know that, then how will we get on in marriage?" The visitors became angry, and my parents also became angry and asked: "If you don't want to talk, it's ok, but why ask these questions?"

The youth did not reply. He had seen me in Delhi in Inter-Collegiate Debate. His uncle said: "These questions are to be asked of elders, not to youth." I replied: "What will I do marrying a person who does not have an answer to such questions?" Then I ran away, went upstairs to my room and closed the door, fearing a good scolding.

The guests were very upset with my father and asked: "Did you call us here to take away our self-respect? If your daughter does not want to get married, why call us here?" My aunt was mad and said: "Wait till you come outside." Father said to mother: "Don't you know your daughter? Why did you do this?"

Next morning I knew there was a train for Nagpur at 6.00 a.m., so I went straight to the station and left for Nagpur.

My grandmother and aunt did not try to arrange for another meeting with a suitor to marry me.

My grandmother was often very upset with me because I was not ready to get married. As a result of this behaviour of mine, my mother had to go through a lot of pain from her mother and her sisters. One of my aunts lived in Jhansi, where a man called Dhulekar Kaka resided who was a friend of Nehru and a follower of Gandhi. He used to support my grandmother and aunt and said: "Why should a female study higher?" I used to reply: "You are claiming to be a follower of Gandhi, and you use the phrase 'Aurat ki jaat' (category of women). Are we not human beings? Do you not consider females as humans?" He had no answer.

So my mother had to go through a lot of pain because of my behaviour. One day my mother said to me. "Vimal your behaviour is such that all my relatives are unhappy with you. From your father's side there is no one, but from my side all my relatives are unhappy with me".

My grandfather had died when I was twelve. If he were alive, he would have supported me. My grandmother was there. She used to come every year and stay for a couple of months. Mother announced: "I have such a daughter that if she were not born, it would be better, and if born then if she had died at birth it would have been better!" It must have been because of something grandmother said to her. She was feeling angry and she released her anger toward me.

Leaving Home

So I left home and went to live in Tukroji Maharaj's ashram. While I was living there, Tukroji called a close devotee of his, Prabhatai (who had been widowed from childhood) and said: "You worship the statue of Bal Krishna, here take your Bal Krishna," and he pushed me towards her.

In Akola, mother had taken ill. When father came home in the evening after my leaving home, he was told what took place. He said: "Vimal's mother what has happened is not good. The girl will find her way, but it was not good what happened."

Mother felt so bad, regretting what she had done to her innocent daughter, that after four or five days, she came down with a fever. The fever would not leave. It went on for one-and-half months and no matter what medicines the doctors gave to her, the fever would not come down. When the doctors found that none of their medicines worked, they asked: "Has she been through a shock?"

Father sent a note to Tukroji Maharaj saying: "Send Vimal home." He knew I was with Tukroji Maharaj, because Tukroji Maharaj had told me to write home or he would write. I said: "You go ahead." So he wrote a postcard in his big handwriting saying Vimala was with him and they should not worry. Hence, father knew where I was.

Maharaj was not there when the postcard arrived, but when he returned he called me and said there is letter from my father. "Should I go?" He answered: "Yes, look, in the rainy season the rivers overflow; mother or father's anger is like the water overflowing from the banks of a river – you don't get angry with the river when that happens." Maharaj asked Prabhatai to go with me to Akola and provided return fare.

Mother couldn't believe her eyes when she saw her Vimal back at home. She thought that since she had asked me to leave the house and said it would be better if I had died at birth, she would never see her daughter again. She was crying when she saw me come back. In twenty-four hours the fever came down to normal. I stayed for fifteen days and the day Ma began to recover I left.

I learned from Maharaj that just as the river overflows so the anger of a human being overflows. You need not react strongly and hold onto the emotion as a block in the mind. The words: "reaction-free mind," I did not know then nor understand, but when anyone wanted to teach me something important, I was very interested. I felt life was an occasion for learning, and if we have an opportunity to learn, it is God's grace. Those who teach are in God's image.

I didn't hold onto any negative reaction in my mind. I felt why keep any klesha in the consciousness or any pain in the consciousness? We have got this opportunity to live, why pollute it or spoil it by these conflicts? I did not know then the words, but now I realise: "*Avidya asmita raga dwesha abhinivesha pancha klesha and klesha nivrutti kevalyam.*"

I did not understand Patanjali Yoga at that time. He explains that it is necessary in relationships to live with a *Klesha nivrutti chitta* and that is spirituality. The only thing

I understood was that it is no use to keep conflicts in the consciousness and live with them; there is no joy in living that way. I had not caught the whole truth then, but as sparks ignite so the sparks of Atma were igniting.

This understanding even had a very good effect on mother, and we became good friends. Later on, if she wanted to go anywhere on Yatra (pilgrimage), instead of asking her sons, she would say: "My Vimal will take me." When she wanted to go to Gaya, to Dwarka, she said: "Vimal will take me."

Facing Difficulties Of Social Customs

Because of Vimalaji's unconventional way of living - deciding not to get married, meeting with Saints to enhance her inner search , she encountered difficulties and faced considerable gossip.

In my younger days I would go to meet Tukroji Maharaj and would travel with him. Tukroji Maharaj was very fond of me; he asked me to accompany him to many places. When he would travel by car he used to take me with him. When his Asana was to be prepared, first the asana used to be prepared for me, then for him. He was older than me maybe by eighteen to twenty years. Until that time in his life he never had anything to do with any girl.

This created quite a commotion, quite a stir among his devotees. They wondered why a saint is accompanied by a girl. Among his devotees there were anti-Brahmin feelings, and for that reason also there was a commotion.

There was a lawyer from Amravati who wrote in an Amravati newspaper that it looks like Saint Tukroji Maharaj will marry a young girl called Vimala Thakar. When Maharaj visited Amravati he asked Vakil Sahib to meet with him. He called me also and said: "Vimal you know what this Vakil Sahib is saying? He says that Tukroji is going to marry Vimal. What do you say to that?" The lawyer became very embarrassed. Maybe in my eyes there was anger. Tukroji Maharaj went on: "Vakil Sahib, even if one wants to get married, would one marry a lady who is already wed? Would I be so foolish to marry someone who is already married?"

This is the kind of reply Maharaj gave wAkharte Sahib's eyes reached his forehead. "She is married and yet she moves around with you?" Now the Vakil became even more scared. He must have wondered why this girl who was not married, Tukroji calls married. "Vakil Sahib from the age of five this girls marriage has taken place with God. Who will get married with her? Tell me now, do I have a chance?" I was so amused and felt like laughing. My anger vanished. Maharaj had this way of dealing with persons and situations. He used to say: "If you have committed a sin, you have to hide it. Do you have to hide love?" Then in my presence he said: "Vakil Sahib, you do not recognise this girl's right, status. She is of a higher calibre than we are, she is purer than we are, she is made of purer stuff than we are." This is how it was; people used to do such injustices by spreading gossip.

Don't think in my path I did not have difficulties. People used to go to my parents and say all kinds of things. My father would reply: "She is our blood, do we know her better or do you? The day Vimal wants to marry anyone, before the world gets to know, we will know."

When I started working with Dada, he had passed fifty-five. Tukroji Maharaj was younger than he that is why when I was traveling with Maharaj; there were those who were suspicious.

T.V.Deshpande was one of the writers of Nagpur, who questioned why Dada was associating with a girl. It was an indirect accusation of Dada, that such a big leader of Congress and Sarvodaya, is attached to this girl. The word used was "Aaskta"; it is a big word. He was a friend of Dada's, and on one occasion, Dada said to him: "I am not concerned for myself; I have nothing to lose. If there were any truth in what has been written, then we could deal with the situation, but there is no truth in it. You should write with some restraint and caution." While Deshpande was sitting there, I described the incident that took place with Tukroji Maharaj. I asked Dada: "Does one have to drink any more poison than that incident which has taken place before my eyes? Now what more can people write? Let them write what they want, do not worry about me."

As suspicions had been raised, Dada wanted to clarify matters. He called together in Nagpur, Laximan

Shastri of Maharashtra, Goel Shastri and Govindrao's elder brother. He made them all sit together and said: "Ask Vimal any questions you want on this topic of attachments, and whether her consciousness has been touched by sexual desire."

Dada used to say: "Her Brahmacharya is natural to her from birth". Tukroji Maharaj also said the same thing: "Her child-like nature and innocence is indication of that." Vinoba commented: "When Brahmacharya is from birth, then you get such straight forwardness."

The people Dada called asked all kinds of questions. Now I do not remember all the questions asked, but the nature of the questions was something like: After seeing a male do you have any reactions in your consciousness? In college days, while studying with males did you experience any excitement, Kama? After I answered the questions, Gajanand Rao Malgaonkar went to Dada and touched his feet.

In my life, except for these two incidents, nothing else has occurred on this topic.

Even today it does not come to my mind this sexual consciousness, this duality of the sexes, or that the tension between the sexes has to be controlled. What I had definitely done was invite young men to visit my home and go through Rakhi ceremony.

Self-Protection

In the time of Vimalaji's youth, to travel around in India alone as a girl was a rare thing, normally some male member of *the family would accompany the girl. From childhood Vimalaji was very brave and fearless in her rebellion "to be recognised as a human being in a female body".*

I was going to Raipur to my grandfather's house the intermediate exam was over. I boarded a train, a third-class bogy, at Nagpur Station and entered a ladies compartment. There were ladies sitting in the compartment. The train left in the evening and would reach Raipur by 6.00 a.m. the next morning.

I slept on the top berth. In the night suddenly I was awakened from my sleep. It was 3.30 or 4.00 a.m., and I saw that there was not one lady in the compartment. There were only two Muslim men drinking liquor and eating. What had happened? In those days there were no bars on the compartment windows so I made a plan. When the train would begin to slow for the next station, I would jump out of the window. As the train slowed down, I climbed down from the berth and then jumped out of the window. In the railway yard there was a fence of wires and big nails. I landed on one big nail that went through the knee from one side and came out the other. I fell unconscious.

The train had been nearing Vrook station. When I came to consciousness, I was in a hospital. Some hospital staff were asking my name and I told them everything that happened. I explained that that I am a relative of Yadav Rao, and they became very attentive and took me to Raipur in a car.

Meeting With Bhalji Pendharkar

While still in college, I was called to Rajaram College, Kholapur, for a debate competition. A big tent had been put up for the competition, and the debate was about to begin. However there was a fight between Praja Congress and the Kholapur royal family so some angry persons set fire to the tent. I was seated in the tent near a pole and I noticed a gentleman come running towards me. He yelled: "Get up, get up from here, come on." He pulled me by the hand and took me out. That portion of the tent later fell down in the flames.

All of us who came for the debates were staying in the Government Bawda, guest house. The debate program could not take place, because of the differences between the Congress and the government, so the whole program was cancelled and arrangements were made for us to return. In the evening I was sitting in the lounge of the Bawda Guest House when the gentleman whom I had met in the morning came to me and sat down. He had on a woolen cap and kurta/kafni pajama. He introduced himself to me: "My name is Bhalji Pendharkar. I have a cinema theatre and I make films. I feel very ashamed that your program has been cancelled so I have been thinking that I could myself organize the program for tomorrow. If you give us permission I can do it."

I responded: "What need do you have for my permission?" He said: "Because I am a very bad man in the sight of the society. I can be considered a sinner and maybe there is no addiction that I have not done. I am the companion of Bagat Singh and Sukhdev (revered freedom fighters of India). I have lived in the house of prostitutes during the Freedom Struggle, and you are a young girl and there are two other girls with you, that is why. Without your consent I cannot make the arrangements." I said: "Look, Pendharkarji, the man who knows he is a sinner, of him we have nothing to fear; that person who thinks he is a good man, of him we can be afraid." "Ok, then I can make the arrangement?" I replied: "Happily."

So began a relation with Bhalji Pendharkar, the roots of which were here, in this first meeting.

The next day we had the debate program in Maharani Laxmibai Auditorium. There was a lot of praise for the talks and some people insisted that we stay on for a few more days.

I don't remember the topic of the talk, but in those days, there was no normality only intoxication. I was intoxicated with the teachings of Vivekananda, of Ram Tirth, with Aham Brahmasmi.

Our arrangements with Government Guest House were over after the program, and again Bhalji made a proposal: "Would you people like to come and stay in my Studio Guest House?" I replied: "Yes, we'll stay." "Ok, then I'm going home; the rooms I'm going to offer you will be completely cleaned, and then I will come and fetch you. I have three wives and all of them will stay in your service. I know you are vegetarian; my wife will look after all your needs".

Dada and I stayed many times with Bhalji Pendharkar on later occasions. Jai Prakashji, Prabhavatiji stayed in his house in Panalgadh. When Tukroji Maharaj was ill, I have often taken him to stay in the house of Bhalji.

My brother was very unhappy that I had been a guest of Bhalji Pendharkar. He complained to my father: "She is staying with cinema theatre persons; that Bhalji Pendharkar is a sinner and she goes and stays at his house. On the one hand she doesn't want to get married and on the other hand, look at what she does, where she goes and stays?" I said: "I don't know how to live according to the rules of society; how can one refuse when a person comes and opens his whole life in front of you? How many such people are there in the society? Will anyone do that? Those who have a wish for fame, for recognition are usually afraid of being blamed."

My youth was spent in taking such courageous steps. I had to put up with a lot of criticism, had to bear it, for staying in the home of Bhalji. When Dada stayed there, the criticism stopped.

Dada wrote an article commenting that Bhalji Pendharkar's Chitra Mandir is more pure than an ashram. He wrote that in the whole complex of Bhalji's studio, it is forbidden to smoke cigarettes or bedi. Bhalji and his entire staff meet in the Hanumanji Mandir each morning to say Prathana (Morning Prayer), and only after prayer, would they begin their work. In the evening when work was done, there would be prayers and then the staff would go home.

He belonged to the Rashtraya Sevak Sangh, Hindu Maha Sabha. I remarked: "Even if he belonged to Hindu Maha Sabha, what difference does it make? It is the person Bhalji Pendharkar who is coming to call us; Hindu Maha Sabha is not coming to call us". Others asked: "Do they remain separate like that?" And I responded: "Yes, he has kept it separate."

I faced many misunderstandings in life. Life has very strange ways of bringing people together. I never went in search of Bhalji Pendharkar. I have a mantra of life: *"Seek not, what Life does not bring to you. Reject not, what Life brings to you."*

Father did not object to the arrangements made by Bhalji Pendharkar, but Ma felt scared. She questioned: "What need is there for you do all this? All what you say is true, but what need do you have to go? Don't go." And I replied: "Why insult him? Because he calls I am going, I do not go on my own." Ma wondered: "Why is my daughter unnecessarily doing this? She should not do it." Ma had to look after the household and listen when others said: "My goodness, your daughter is going and staying with Bhaljikar. What does that mean?" She had to listen to all that. That is why I say, because of my lifestyle, the one who has had the most difficulties has been Ma.

Living One's Understanding

We have seen how Vimalaji lived her life in childhood, in youth; through the college and university days and how she lived *her understanding through all odds. After having gone through all these experiences, later on in life Vimalaji could share with others, how one can live one's understanding, how one can live in society and yet not be of it.*

There may be the pain and agony of criticism or the sadness of relatives forsaking you, because you adhere to moral or spiritual values, but you go through it. There is no choice. Once you understand the Truth there is no choice but to live the Truth; otherwise there will be inner conflict. The truth will prick at you whenever you become a victim to the false.

After having seen the false as the false, if you do not allow it to drop away from you, if you cling to the false after having seen it as the false, then your understanding of the truth becomes a thorn in your consciousness. It keeps pricking you.

Life is for understanding. The clarity of understanding is the sunshine of inner consciousness and living the truth that you understand gives you a sense of fulfillment, which no social honors, can ever confer upon you. Having discharged your responsibility of living your own understanding, there is a kind of peace, a satisfaction inside, and after all we are searching for peace, we are searching for satisfaction, we are searching for inner freedom.

I think those who live their understanding enjoy the ecstasy of that inner freedom, peace and satisfaction of integrity – they are non-purchasable things, they are from the realm of the infinite, the eternal.

Human beings have no choice but to live their understanding because they are recipients of the faculty – not only of knowing - but of understanding. They are the recipients of an energy that is perceptive sensitivity that is intelligence. They have the faculty of self-consciousness and self-awareness so they have a great responsibility to learn, to discover, to understand and to live the truth that they understand.

Chapter Four

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Contributing to Social Change

The Light Spreads

A new vision
of compassionate social action
based on
a refined sense of
the interrelatedness of all beings,
and clarity
about moving a life of silence
into action.

The Cross of Sorrow

I am nailed to the cross of sorrow
They are honored thus who dare love humanity.
The cross is not crude nor made of wood.
It is subtle and fine, made of 'I' & 'Mine'.

The clouds of human suffering hang heavy,
My eyes do droop and drowse under them.

The unshed tears of massacred innocence,
well up and fill the heart to the brim.

The undreamt dreams of slaughtered youth
darken the tear-soaked eyelashes

The unfulfilled passion of widowed womanhood
Scorch and simmer the trembling heart
The strangled sobs of orphaned infancy
Stifle and choke the withering breath.
I am nailed to the cross of Sorrow
They are honored thus, who dare love humanity.

... *Vimala*

Chapter Four

Contributing to Social Change

The Light Spreads

INTRODUCTION

Vimalaji holds that no individual, whether an enquirer or a Sanyasi or a Sadhak should ever be a burden on society, but should serve the land in which the person is born. An enquirer, even if not working for a wage, should contribute in some way to social well-being and upliftment, should serve the people.

Right from childhood Vimalaji had a strong tendency to serve, to share whatever understanding she had with others. Even when she was still in school Vimalaji started a Vivekananda Study Circle. Later, when she was in college, she organized camps during the summer months for the girls, teaching them swimming, horseback riding, and means of self-protection, including use of lathi, bhala etc. After her B.A.

examination, she started a school in Bhandara and ran it for two years.

Vimalaji being concerned about the suffering of the people and would say: "I will join a Movement if it is revolutionary. And I will only consider that Movement revolutionary, which has its foundation in spirituality."

However there was no such Movement in sight when Vimalaji completed her University studies. After her University education was over Vimalaji was chosen to represent India on the World Council of Young Women, serving in U.S.A. and Belgium.

Vimalaji was there for only a few months when she was informed about a revolutionary movement with a spiritual foundation, being started in India. She left the Council, returned to India, observed this Movement and then joined it.

Through all her involvement in social work Vimalaji showed that one can continue one's spiritual inquiry while living in the society, in the midst of people, one need not leave society or go into seclusion for that.

Joining Bhoodan

Representative to World Council of Young Women

After completing my studies I was sent for the World Assembly of Youth Conference in U.S.A. I went to America and was made the Chairperson of the Conference and chosen to go to the World Council of Young Women at Cornell University, in U.S.A. First I was with the World Assembly of Youth in America which was followed by a Session in Brussels for the World Council of Youth. Then I was chosen to be a permanent member of World Council of Youth and was chosen as the Chairperson of the World Council of Young Women. Next I was chosen as a representative of the youth in the education department of UNESCO. As I was chosen as the representative of the Youth, I had to go to Geneva, for the UNESCO meetings. I was overseas for about six months.

When I was serving on World Council of Young Women, the Bhoodan Andolan had started. Dada (Dharmadhikari) wrote to me: "In your consciousness there is so much grief and pain over the poverty and suffering of the masses of India, and you have been saying if a Movement began for changing society which had a spiritual background you would call it a revolution and join it." I must have said that in some discussion, so Dada remembered and wrote to me: "Vinobaji has started the

Bhoodan Andolan for bringing about a change in society with a foundation based on spirituality." So I left for India.

Learning about Bhoodan

The Andolan or Movement was a revolution with a spiritual foundation. Perhaps for the first time in human history, land changed hands without bloodshed, was gifted to the landless tiller out of the goodness of the heart, out of compassion and not through force or blood shed.

It was Vinoba, an associate of Gandhi, who brought forward the Bhoodan Movement. He recognized that although it was good to have a parliamentary democracy, such a government can only exist in an atmosphere of individual freedom.

The masses of society Vinoba saw were without direction, landless and without means for self-sufficiency. They were not the 'people' of a democracy.. So Vinoba suggested that the land that the villagers tilled should be their own. Means of production must be owned by the producer.

It was the same revolutionary economic philosophy of Gandhiji. Just as Gandhi fought the British with the weapons of truth and non-violence, Vinoba collected land by asking, persuading, and convincing owners of the rightness of his requests.

Vinoba launched his movement after Mao and Chou En Lai had succeeded with their Farmers' Revolution in China. If the global context for the Gandhian Movement was the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, then the global context for Vinoba's movement was the Chinese revolution. But even though farmers were leaders of the Chinese Revolution, still they used violence, conflict, hatred and jealousy as motivational forces for their revolution. There was as much blood shed in China as there was in Russia, but in Vinobaji's Land Gift Movement thousands of acres of land changed hand without a drop of blood being shed

Observing the Bhoodan Movement

In November, 1952 I returned to India from Europe. On the first of December 1952, Jai Prakashji (great socialist leader, freedom fighter and acquaintance of Gandhiji) had returned to Pune after undergoing a 21-day fast for purification of the mind. He was going to meet Vinobaji in Bihar and study the Bhoodan Andolan. Dada took me to the railway station to introduce me to Jai Prakash. He announced: "Jai Prakash, this is my daughter; she also wants to study the Bhoodan Andolan, so take her with you." Dada left me at the station and left me with Jai Prakash Narayan.

Until then I had not met Jai Prakash Narayan(A freedom fighter and well known public figure) or Achyutji or Rao Sahib Patwardhan (two brothers of the royal family of Pathwardhan of Maharashtra who were Theosophists and freedom fighters and knew J. Krishnamurti intimately). For the following one month, wherever Jai Prakashji and Prabhavati (his wife, who was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi and had lived in Gandhiji's Ashram) went, I also went and listened to their talks. With them I studied Bhoodan Andolan.

What attracted me to Vinobaji was his concern for the elimination of economic exploitation. Marx, Lenin and Mao had the same concern. Vinobaji said land must belong to the tiller and those who do not till land haven't any right to keep an inch of land. The difference between the revolution of Marx, Lenin and Mao, and the revolution of Vinoba's was in the approach. Marx, Lenin and Mao collected the exploited people together and said fight against those who exploited you. Vinobaji did not tell the landless tiller to fight against the landowners. His was a novel way. He appealed to the good sense of human beings. He appealed to their sense of compassion. I was attracted to this new way of working.

Vinoba walked throughout India, from Kanyakumari in the south to Kashmir in the north, from Dwarka in the west to Assam in the east. Those of you who have not seen this great Saint on the march will not understand how difficult it was to walk through Indian villages and towns in rainy season, in winter and summer. He had the ability to create a moral atmosphere.

Vinobaji did not try to divide people into classes. He said to both rich and poor: "All of you have some weakness and good points, help each other." That was his first step.

Then in the next step, he appealed to the people of the village to cooperate with each other in buying seeds, in selling the goods, thus teaching them the spirit of sharing and cooperation.

It was an economic revolution based on spiritual values and Gandhian methodology.

Making a Commitment

In January 1953, along with Jai Prakash I went to meet Vinobaji who was staying in South Bihar. I had met Baba (Vinobaji) when I was ill. I had been to Baba's Ashram two or three times. There was no personality attraction, so that meeting with him, did not leave much of an impression on my consciousness - neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

When Jai Prakashji met him, he said: "I will work with you, Vinobaji." Jai Prakash Narayan continued talking with Vinobaji. Damodardas Munda was sitting there, Nirmala was sitting there, and Gowribabu, Dwajababu were also there.

When Vinobaji finished talking with Jai Prakash Narayan, he turned to me: "What do you want to say?" I replied: "I am giving you five years, but I will not become your student, I will not take any of your vows; if you say cut off your hair, wear short pants, I won't be able to do all that. This Revolution of yours, because it has its foundation in spirituality, it appeals to me, I like it. As long as there is agreement in our thinking, I will work with you, otherwise I will leave you." Jai Prakashji kept looking at me and wondering what is she saying.

Vinobaji asked: "What is all this bargaining?" I replied: "This is not bargaining; it is good that from the start there should be clarity. I drink tea and if I work in Bhoodan, I will continue drinking tea, I do not only wear Khadi, but if it is the rule of the Andolan then I will wear and use only Khadi." "OK, it is all right. It is all accepted."

Jai Prakash Narayan was looking on absolutely shocked. He was a very soft person and he was wondering what is going on. He was just looking on; he didn't say anything.

Vinobaji said: "Look, you are the first one who is going to work with me making a contract. Come on, let's shake hands." He continued: "See Jai Prakashji she works by making contracts." I did not feel a bit embarrassed and I shook his hand. Then he asked: "So for how many years is our contact?" I said: "Five years." I went for five years and worked for ten years.

The Bhoodan Movement added a new dimension to spiritual search. Before then I was turning inward, doing meditation, spending time in solitude in the Himalayas, but when I realized that a Yogi like Vinobaji was conducting the Bhoodan Movement, was getting involved in social and economic revolution, I was interested in finding out more about it. In the past, in India the Yogis have not entered the social stream and worked in this way with the people, except Vivekananda who started the Ramakrishna Mission.

Beginning the Work

Gaining Experience

Vinobaji called Damodar and introduced Damodar to us: "This is Damodardas Munda; you follow what he says." But Damodar said: "No Jai Prakash Narayan is moving around in Gaya district, so I will go with him, and we will take Vimaltai with us."

Thus it happened that in Gaya Zilla, I began to help Damodardas Munda in the office, looking after the files, writing accounts, cleaning his office, cooking for him. So for three months I took the job of office assistant.

I gained experience in the way things were working, because I went to his talks, to his meetings and had to write down his talks. Within the first three months I got the first shock (at the way the work was being conducted). I used to tell him: "Don't announce that we have received land unless we have the Daan Patra (the gift deed) in our hands". Damodardasji said:"No, this is the test of non-violence; if the man says he will donate land, he is not going to go back on his word". I said: "But a Revolution cannot be done this way. The gift deed should be in your hands, or tomorrow people will begin to talk and say you made wrong announcements, you spoke lies."

Bhau (brother) did not listen to me. I got a big jolt. I said: "This is untruthful. We are trying to work for a Revolution, a non-violent revolution. Its whole strength is based on truthfulness, and if we desert the path of truthfulness then where will we be?" He felt that I was splitting hairs. He said: "Thousands of people come for the meeting, and a atmosphere is created and many make announcements." And I said: "People may make an announcement, but if they don't give the land, then what?" He did not have the courage to change his ways. And I did not understand this way of behavior because I had never lived with people who live in an ashram. Narayanbhai (son of Mr. Desai who was secretary to Gandhiji and who wrote the famous biography of Gandhiji) described it properly when he told Dada: "Your daughter is bourgeois. You should have first acquainted her with life in an Ashram." But I had no acquaintance with that life.

The second thing that troubled me was that when Baba was on the yatra, letters went out requesting things for him, but all the items received were not sent on to Baba. Necessary goods were requested for Baba. For example, letters to Vaidyanath Dham (Institute manufacturing Ayurvedic medicine) were dictated to me to write, ordering or requesting certain items.

My Atman used to say that whatever goods came for a person must reach that person. From those goods, not even one item, one book should be kept back. If I made use of it or anyone else makes use of it, then it was wrong. If goods came for one person and were used by someone else, I felt that the energy of the Revolution was being lost.

I used to cry. I had never seen an Andolan, I had never seen a movement, I had never stayed in public life. Others in the movement called me hypersensitive or fussy. Within three months I began to feel considerable pain. I thought this is a new kind of revolution which Mao could not do, which is not in Marxism. It is such pure work, we should not spoil it. A new step is being taken here. It is a revolution in which ideas are explained to the people, so it is a revolution to bring about a change of heart, a change in understanding. It is an attempt to bring about a change in conditionings. People said why make such a fuss over such small things, but there is nothing small. A big or small hole is a hole, and water will seep out. If there is a ship and there is a small hole in it, water will get in and the ship can sink.

This was my feeling. I did not have the courage to go to Vinobaji, so I spoke with Jai Prakash Narayan. Jai Prakash Narayan commented: "You are a Brahman and Brahmans are known for splitting hairs. In movements, in Andolans, these things happen; don't go into such small details." I said: "Ok."

I stayed quiet, but I was not satisfied. Dada was there so I shared my dissatisfaction: "If Bhoodan work is going to go on like this, it won't do. I am dissatisfied with it, I think I won't do the work." "You are saying this after just three months, but you have given your word for five years?" "Yes, but what about this?" "Look, did you start the Andolan? Have all these people come here because of you? No, they have not come because of you; they have not come because you have called them. They have come because of Vinobaji. To see what happens, what does not happen, is it Vinobaji's responsibility or is it yours? Why do you take it on your head? Whatever responsibilities have been given you, fulfill them." I thought this is right, my ego has come in the way, and I have taken over the responsibility.

But I was not fully satisfied with this reply, as I was not satisfied with the answer given to me by Jai Prakash Narayan. I thought if such a great person like Jai Prakash Narayan says don't go into such small details, and Dada is voicing the same opinion, the mistaken idea must be mine. In spite of that, I felt a tinge of sadness.

Later on in Bihar, when a lot of bogus gift deeds were submitted, affairs reached such a state that the great being, Vinobaji, had to say: "Baba is bogus." The great beings have to drink the poison of their co-workers. "Baba is bogus, so Baba's Bhoodan also is bogus." He had to say this, later on.

But what happened in Bihar – maybe, took place later on in the rest of the Movement - the roots were there in the early days. The workers did not have proper training, education. I wondered how come they don't have the sense, they don't have the sensitivity to know that those things which have not come for us, should not be touched. Everything that is sent by well wishers - whether it is clothes, food - anything, every bit of it should go to the person for whom it has come. There can be many reasons for the root cause of lack of success of Bhoodan Andolan. But in my mind then, and even today, I feel that what people call small things, are not small. There are no small things in life. In life no one second is more precious or more important than another moment – all are equal.

People put the question to me: "Why did you not go to Vinoba?" I did not have the courage to meet Baba, because I felt that I cannot talk as an equal with Baba, as I used to talk with Tukroji Maharaj and other saints. They used to tolerate my frankness; they would tolerate it, swallow it.

I worked in Ranchi District in my own way for three months, after that I met Baba. Then, I took the courage to talk with him about another matter.

Baba used to say: "In the light of a lamp, some people read Ramayana, some people steal, is that the responsibility of the lamp?" "But Bhoodan Andolan is yours Baba, is not it?" "I am not a leader; this has been forced on me by destiny. As long as Bapu (Gandhiji) was there, where was Vinoba? But destiny caught me and brought me out, so in spite of me the Andolan is going on – in spite of me, not because of me."

After hearing this there was nothing left to say or to do. The experience of working in Bhoodan in the first three months was not very pleasant, for that reason I say I was just fulfilling my role.

My Atman or my conscience used to pinch me, and I would feel if you have taken up a job then you have to take responsibility. But he was a Maha Purush, (great being). The sting was there even when Dada scolded me and asked: "Have they come because of you? Why do you take the responsibility? This is national work that is going on, you contribute as much as you want, and then keep quiet."

This is how the work began. Under the leadership of Janakidevi Bajaj in Ranchi Zilla, the work took place. Nirmala and I did a lot of work there. Nirmala knew Baba so the talk with Baba used to take place through her. We used to say to Nirmala: "You go and tell Baba." We used to feel scared thinking, what will Baba say? There was not the closeness then with Baba; the closeness came later.

Baba suggested: "Write down all of Jai Prakash Narayan's talks, that way you will also improve your Hindi and get an education in Hindi." (Vimalaji was born in Maharashtra and had a better grasp of Marathi language than Hindi then.) Each day I would write down in a notebook three talks given by Jai Prakash Narayan. The notebook would go to Baba once every seven days, and he would make corrections in the margin. Where that great being found the time to read through the notebooks, I don't know, but my Hindi improved. After fifteen days, Jai Prakash Narayan said: "Vimalben, now you start giving talks, whether for five minutes or ten minutes." So I began giving talks.

After three months, I was given the responsibility of looking after the whole Guhma sub-division of Ranchi District. The whole year of 1953 was a year of learning how to give talks, to speak in large meetings, conferences and gatherings. My fear of speaking in public meetings left.

When I was working in Bihar, they were the days of my youth, so there was some sharpness in the way I put things. In one public meeting I said: "This is not Congress Raj, this is Kauns Raj. " (A corrupt leader) Shri Babu was Chief Minister, and he went to Vinobaji and complained: "Who is this girl? Wherever she goes, there are big public meetings?"

When I gave a talk, the minimum audience used to be 25,000 whether it was in Darbhanga, Madubani, Samistipur, Motihari - anywhere from 50,000 to 60,000 people. Without exaggeration one could compare the size of the audience with J.P.'s (Jai Prakash Narayan) and Vinobaji's meetings. We had started receiving the land, Bhoodan, on a good scale.

So this complaint of Shri Babu reached Vinobaji. Since Dada was to come to meet me, Vinobaji asked Dada to explain to me that there is no reason to speak in this way. Dada said: "Ok". Dada took me to Patna to Shri Babu's house, and said to Shri Babu: "This daughter of ours has newly come out of University, and does not know the way of putting things, that is why she called Congress Raj, Kauns Raj. She should have said Krishna's maternal uncle's Raj. The family in which Kauns was born is the same stream as Krishna's. She never knew how to put it". He got me to apologize. But I got a glimpse of Dada's grandeur. Shri Babu had to laugh. Dada said "Even between real brothers, some can be Kauns, some can be Krishna; she still has to learn a lot. She may have said it, but you elders should not take these matters to heart."

Bihar was a center of Socialists. Sometimes I was taken to meetings of Socialists. In one Conference of Socialists where we went, there were no ladies in the Gathering. So I said during my talk: "It looks like in Socialists' homes there are no women — not one lady is here, not one mother, not one daughter, not one sister is present and you are calling it a Gathering on the state level, what kind of Socialism is this?

In this way I used to have sharp exchanges with the Socialists.

In Ranchi Zilla and Ghuma subdivision, I gave a talk in a village where there was a big landowner, Lal Babu. He kept 1000 acres land for each son; the rest of his land he donated to Bhoodan. He made me sit down, and he gave me a Daan Patra. I was very happy that we received about 21,000 acres of land in gift and thought how happy Vinobaji will be. We went with Lal Babu and his wife to meet Vinobaji. Lal Babu had also become the member of the organizing committee of the Zilla. But when we went to meet Vinobaji, he would not give us any attention. I tried thrice to draw his attention to the fact that we have received so much land from Lal Babu. For Vinobaji, it was all the same, whether the donation was five acres or 21,000 acres. In the end, when I caught his eye and introduced Lal Babu to him, what did he ask Lal Babu? "You have kept 1000 acres for each of your four sons; are they going to plough the field? Is that why you have kept it? If they are not going to plough the land, then they too should give it in Daan".

From that incident I learned that if somebody has donated a lot of land it does not mean he has done us a favor - it is not like that. In my mind there was the weight of the consideration, that after one talk, they have donated so much land. From his response, I learned that one has to have a holistic perspective, and also inquire into what land has been kept back, to what use it is going to be put. I never even considered that aspect, and was celebrating, was so happy for what was given. So I learnt that in the sight of a revolutionary, there should not be close sightedness.

Vinobaji sent me to Bengal, and with the organizers, we did Yatra throughout Bengal.

In 1954, he sent me to Assam with Dhirenbabu. From 1954, a close relationship with Assam began, which lasted until 1962. We traveled throughout Assam. Then from there he sent me to the South. In Tamil Nadu, the Pad Yatra started in Rameshwaram and went up to Arcot, and from Kanyakumari up to Palghar. I studied Malayalam language and Tamil language during the Yatra. I did not travel much in Andhra or in Karnataka or in Maharashtra. He said a girl from Maharashtra will not be sent to Maharashtra.

He sent me to Gujarat, and Vajubhai Shah and Jayaben Shah were with me in Rajkot, and have stayed at Dhebarbhai's house. I have traveled quite a lot in Gujarat.

Study during the Bhoodan Yatra

Vimalaji considered the time in Bhoodan as a period of deep study. In order to understand the Revolution that was taking place and appreciate its historic significance and unique contribution, Vimalaji made a study of Communism, Socialism, Gandhian philosophy, Sarvodaya philosophy etc. She did this along with her work in Bhoodan Andolan.

Though I did my M.A. in philosophy at Nagpur University, I had an opportunity to study the fundamental wisdom of our Indian heritage during Bhoodan Andolan. I had a chance to study in Sanskrit; I knew Sanskrit from school. I studied the first ten Upanishads with Dada while travelling by bus and by train. I heard Brahma Sutras from Vinobaji while we were walking.

I had to study western philosophy for the M.A.; at that time very little Indian philosophy was taught in college. There were only one or two papers on Indian philosophy out of nine, and the remaining were on Western philosophy, on topics like Plato, Socrates, Plotinous, Aristotle, Western Logic, Eastern Logic, Western psychology, Indian psychology. To understand Indian philosophy I read Dasgupta, Ranade.

I had never read Gandhiji's literature before. I had read some of Vinobaji's books like "Madukar", "Jivan Drishti", "Gita Pravchan", "Stitha Pragyna Darshan" etc., but I had not read the works of Gandhiji or Kumarappa, Kriplaniji, Dhirenbhai and the writings on Sarvodaya philosophy.

I sat with Dada and made a list of the books I should study and in what order to study them. Then I sat with Rao Sahib and Achyut Patwardhan and made a list of what books to read to understand Socialism, Utopian Socialism, Scientific Socialism etc., the different branches and sub branches.

I asked Jai Prakashji what books to read to understand Communism. Acharya Rammurti helped a great deal in understanding Communism. One could say he used to take our classes

Mr. Banarsi Prasad Jhunjhunwala, a member of Lok Sabha who was a devotee at heart had affection for me. He gave me many books on Gandhian literature. Rao Sahib gave me books on Samajwad which Achyutji had given him. Jai Prakashji and his friend Minu Masani sent some books.

Even while traveling, whether on horseback, on camel-back, on elephant- back, in boat, in jeep, in train or on foot, the study was going on. I would get guidance from Dada, Rao Sahib or Achyutji in this study. From 1953 to 1956 - in these four years - I did an in-depth study of Socialism, Communism and the thoughts of Sarvodaya.

For three years I continued studying and considering how Vinobaji's and Gandhiji's thoughts were beyond and ahead of Communism. In the early days of Bhoodan, I studied as much as I would have in several years at university, at the same time; I was doing the Bhoodan work, doing the Padyatra, asking for the land, speaking at four meetings a day. In those days I was doing not less than sixteen hours of work and whatever free time I had, I would read. What I did not understand, I would add to a questionnaire sheet and would discuss it with Dr. Lohia, Achyutji, Rao Sahib, and Dada. It was a period of deep study and hard work.

Working With Great Leaders

Vinobaji

Vimalaji recalls some special incidents with Vinobaji while working in the Land Gift Movement.

In 1956, Vinobaji was in Karnataka in Dharmpur city and there was a meeting on Fundamental Education (Bunyadi Talim Sabha). While he was there, a scorpion bit him and he was in agony. He was jumping around in circles in great pain and perspiring heavily. Damodarbhaya, Mahadevitai and others were very worried. They were wandering from here to there, wondering what to do, what not to do. Vinobaji who had been moving around very fast suddenly stopped; I have never forgotten that sight. What was he looking at? His pain had gone the perspiration was gone; it was as if he were seeing a beautiful, sweet vision. While standing there, his posture became a mudra (pose). After some time he moved his hands and then his hands became normal again. He announced: "Everything is all right; everyone go to sleep." So we went to sleep.

We did not get to see anything, but the change that took place in him. We also saw that he went to sleep in a happy state of mind, and in the morning he told us this story.

He told us Lord Krishna had appeared, and because of His Darshan or Aalingan, embrace, (I don't remember the exact word), his suffering was gone. He became peaceful. In front of our eyes this took place. I call it Drishtant, a vision, a living experience. It was a physical incident on the level of the senses, on the level of the body.

Another incident worth remembering during the Yatra took place in 1955. It was in Koraput on Vinoba's Yatra. He called Dada, Jai Prakash and me to Koraput. I came from Assam. In Koraput, Vinobaji must have spoken to us about the Andolan, but one day, Vinobaji said: "Vimalanand, your Ramakrishna Paramhansa said if man reaches the state of Nirvikalpa (Samadhi), his body cannot bear that state of Samadhi for more than 21 days and the body will leave. Your Baba has been in Nirvikalpa Samadhi state for six months and was expecting that after 21 days now the body will go; but the body didn't fall away. What is the meaning of this?"

I answered: "The meaning is that in 1885, Ramakrishna Paramhansa left the body, and in 1955, Vinobaji is speaking; time is moving ahead. Maybe the body has increased its capacity to withstand the higher vibration. Perhaps, because the body of Ramakrishna was Bengalese there may have been less energy; that could be why he felt that way. The body of Vinobaji is taut and tight so it can contain higher vibration, so the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi is contained for a longer time."

Vinobaji said "So now the human consciousness can contain the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi; this is what Baba wants to say." And Vinobaji clapped his hands in his own particular way. He was happy.

Before 1950, Maharishi Arvind had spoken about the Atman and its descent, so I recalled what he had said about the descent of the Divine. The descent of the supramental can take place in any human being – whether in Shri Arvind, in Mataji, in Vinobaji– the importance is not of the individual or of the individual body, but the happening, the event is of importance.

When evolution of psychic growth in the inner dimension happens somewhere, it is an important event for the human race. Where it happens is immaterial; it is only of interest to those who want to make a following. I was so happy that Baba called me from Assam to speak about this. He must have spoken about this to others too, but the mere fact that he wanted to speak about his experience made me happy.

Vinobaji often talked with me about Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Vivekananda. He often said: "Your Vivekananda says this, your Ramakrishna says this." I had great love for Ramakrishna Paramhansa, even for Vivekanandji, but more for Ramakrishna and another whom I love deeply with all my heart is Gyaneshwar. Next to Sant Gyaneshwar, I find Ramakrishna, Krishnamurti, Vinobaji mild.

I don't remember all the conversations I had with Vinobaji, but I remember one talk we had after my ear operation when I was in Pune camp in Dr. Dinsha Mehta's Nature Cure Center. Vinobaji asked me: "When you were in hospital did you receive the letters I wrote to you? I replied: "Your letters? I did not get any of your letters." He said: "I did not write them, so how could you get them?" "If you had not written them, then why are you asking?" He replied: "Written letters everyone reads, but I believed that you would read unwritten letters. Bapu had that art; in that old man it was there. If anyone was born – letter, if anyone dies – letter. I had thought ten to twelve times this Vimalanand is lying in hospital, I should write a letter, but the hand would not reach for the pen and paper, so I thought this letter without writing would reach you."

If anyone spoke to Vinobaji about the big Bhoodan Andolan that was going on, he would say: "It is going on, but it is going on in spite of your Baba, in spite of Vinoba. Bapu had the art of bringing people together. I am a simple, unsophisticated person. Destiny has given me this work, so I am doing it, but I don't have the art of gathering people together." He spoke with great honesty. When he talked about himself, it was always with great honesty.

I remember one question Vinobaji asked me about the necessity of taking a guru. Baba asked: "Do you believe that there is no need for a Guru?" I said: "Yes." Then I told him about my father taking a vow from me not to accept the authority either of persons or of books. "So you don't even believe in the Vedas? Why do you not believe?" "But the Vedas are not an authority." He announced: "Baba believes in the authority of the Vedas." I questioned this statement: "Yes I know that, but just because it is written in the Vedas, is it the truth? Maybe even Baba does not believe that? It's necessary to experiment with what is written in the Vedas and to experience the truth from within. Only after firsthand experience of the Atman, does one accept what is written. It is only because of realization of Atman, that one accepts what is written as the Truth."

What is written in the Vedas must be verified by personal experiments conducted with feeling and with respect - that much respect one should have for the granth (book). But after you have the inner experience of Atman, then you are sure about what is written in the Vedas. I said: "In the end, when the inner experience becomes the authority, where then, is there the need for the authority of the Vedas?"

Vinobaji replied: "You will fall into a ditch if you think this way! If you don't accept that the Vedas are an authority, one day you will fall into the ditch." "Those who make a guru don't they fall into a ditch?" He said: "But at least the Guru is with them when they fall into the ditch." I asked: "Baba are you saying that even to fall into a ditch, you need someone for company? No I will fall alone!"

Our conversations, our dialogues would take place in this way. He was a Maha Purush, great Soul, and used to talk like this with us children. I was serious and I think he was also serious. When we had this level of talks, I wondered: "Where was the fear that was there, when I first joined the Andolan in 1953-1954? And where was the distance? That distance became less and less, and then disappeared.

Working with Jai Prakash Narayan

Jai Prakash Narayan was already a well-known national figure when Vimalaji met him for the first time in 1952. He was a freedom fighter and his wife Prabhavatiji was a close friend and follower of Gandhiji. After the freedom struggle he was known as a great Socialist leader. Then when he joined Bhoodan Andolan and worked with Vinobaji, he soon became one of its leaders along with Vinobaji and Vimalaji. It was after the Emergency, when the political situation was in turmoil in India, and there was fear of dictatorship that Jai Prakashji stood up fearlessly against all odds and saved the country from dictatorship and saved the democratic set up of the country. To the last breath he contributed to the betterment of the country and he died serving the country he so loved. He was a dearly beloved leader of the masses who responded to his call and put up a stiff resistance to the dictatorial tendencies of the political leaders. Vimalaji got to know him and Prabhavatiji because of traveling and working together in the Bhoodan Movement. Vimalaji recalls the days of their working together.

I was very close with Prabhavatiji (wife of Jai Prakashji) but not close with Jai Prakash Narayan. I stayed at a respectful distance. Jai Prakashji used to complain to Dada that his wife, Prabha, keeps calling out all day to 'Vimalaben, Vimalaben,' so Vimalaben thinks that only Prabha loves her."

Why didn't closeness with Jai Prakash Narayan grow? Probably because he was a very disorganized person, eating at any time, sleeping at any time. If he was sitting, then he would just keep sitting.

When I stayed with Jai Prakash and Prabhavati, I did all kinds of work, like polishing their shoes, putting oil in their charkhas (spinning wheels), checking the Mala of the charkhas, helping Didi (Prabha) wash the clothes. If we came back from a long trip then Didi and I had to wash the clothes of the past two days. One day in Delhi, Prabhavatiji and I were washing clothes for about two hours. J.P. asked Maltiji: "Where are they, the two of them?" She replied: "The two of them are washing clothes." So he came in search of us and found us drying clothes. He said: "Vimalben, your Didi in an earlier life must be from a dhobi's (laundryman) household," and I replied: "You too must have been there." Then he didn't say anything more.

Jai Prakashji life was very disorganized. We would wait for him for over four hours to come and eat his food. He kept saying: "I'm coming now, I'm coming now." There was no rhythm in eating or sleeping. He, also, did not take much care in keeping accounts of money. If I was serving tea to a guest and saw Jai Prakashji giving the person some money, he would say: "Don't tell Didi!" I announced: "I will surely tell Didi." "No, she will be very unhappy; I'm very afraid of her." I questioned him: "Why do you give money away like that?" "Oh he asked, so I gave it."

When Jai Prakash was ill, Prabhavatiji and I along with others took him to Ranchi. He had agreed with the doctors that he would not meet anyone, would not talk with anyone. His throat had become very bad and he had a fever. For two days he listened to us, and on the third day, he disappeared some where. Later when he came back swaying, we reminded him that the doctors had refused to let him go out. He said: "For two days I was your prisoner, now it is too much."

Though disorganized, he was a man of big heart, he was a great being.

On one occasion in Amritsar, maybe in 1959, we had a very hot exchange. It was at a meeting of Sarva Seva Sangh, of the Organizing Committee. Vinobaji has already told them to call Vimala as permanent invitee, so I used to go.

I was sitting in the Organizing Heads Meeting, and Jai Prakashji was upset with Vallabh Swami, who was also a member of Sarva Seva Sangh. I said: "Jai Prakashji you are not the Jawaharlal Nehru of Sarvodaya Samaj, why do you get angry like that?" Immediately his face became red and Dada said: "Who are you talking to, are you conscious of whom you are talking to?" I said: "Ji." Dada asked: "Jai Prakashji forgive her." I announced: "I am not sitting here as your daughter, Dada; I am sitting here as a member of the committee! What I am saying is in order. It is not proper to get angry like this, to get so upset; we are all members." Dada did not like what I said at all. Prabhavatiji called me outside and said: "Don't you know his temperament?" I said: "Let him know that I also have a particular temperament!"

Dada said: "Vimala, you did not do the proper thing." The incident reached the ears of Vinobaji. Vinobaji had not come to the meeting, maybe he was going to Kashmir.

At the meeting there was a vote by the members for presidentship of the Sarva Seva Sangh. Many members from the Indian states had written Vimala's name as the first preference for the position of president. So first place was Vimala, second was Jai Prakashji, and third was Vallabh Swami.

So I said: "I do not want to be President; I will not join any organization, and I will not take a post in any organization. This is my decision." Jai Prakashji said: "Not even for the country? Do service for this country for five years and then go the Himalayas, if you want to live a spiritual life. If everyone wants it, what objection do you have in accepting it?" Our fight began from this. And maybe today these words would not come out of my lips, but I am speaking about what happened many years ago.

But I did not like that Sarva Seva Sangh or Sarvodaya Samaj should be afraid of Jai Prakashji's anger or be suppressed by it. Prabhavatiji was trying hard to persuade me to ask for forgiveness, but I said: "Didi, I have not done anything to ask for forgiveness. If I had done something wrong even before telling me, I would go in front of fifty people and ask for forgiveness, I would rub my nose on his feet. Explain to me my mistake." Dada said: "Even you have become obstinate, and he will leave out of anger." I said: "So he will leave." Jai Prakashji go so angry he left that evening. In his life he had not heard anyone speak to him in this way.

Incidents During Bhoodan

In the first year of Bhoodan, Vinobaji kept me in Bihar. There is not one Zilla or District in Bihar which I have not been to. My talks began to draw big crowds and there were very big meetings. Vaidnath Babu, Gouri Babu, Dwaja Babu, Laxmi Babu, Kapoori Thakur, Chand Sahib – all these people showed a lot of interest.

In Gaya Zilla, Bihar

I will now narrate to you an incident of Gaya Zilla. It was in Aurangabad Thesil of Gaya Zilla. I don't remember the name of the village. One zamindar - landowner, lived there who was known for his drinking, addictions, prostitution.

When my Padyatra was going through that village, the workers of Bihar told me not to go there. The Congress Zilla Samiti president also said: "Daughter do not go there; it will be of no use." "Why?" "Because he is a very bad person and it is not proper to go there." I said: "Even if he is bad, is he not a citizen of India? Has he not the right to vote?" "Yes, he has". "Then we have to explain to him, for if he has the right to vote then he should be helped to understand." He said: "What you are saying is true, but we will not go to his door." I announced: "You need not come but I will go."

There used to be fifteen to twenty people who traveled with me; but that day only two were willing to go. It was morning, 10.00 A.M., when I knocked at the door. There was a boundary wall and it had a door, so I knocked. Beyond that door there was a courtyard, then there were some rooms for the males, a small courtyard with the section for the ladies, another courtyard and then a wall. This is how the arrangement of the houses of Zamindar - landlords, used to be.

Someone opened the door. He was wearing a lungi and his chest was bare. His eyes were red. He asked: "Who is it? What is it?" "It is your sister." "What?" I said: "Your sister has come to meet you; won't you let us come inside?" He remarked: "This seems to be outsider; doesn't look as if she is from Bihar." I said: "No I am not from Bihar. We work in Vinobaji's Bhoodan Andolan, but we are of Bharat". "Who gave you advice to come to me?" "No one. Everyone tried to prevent me from coming, but I came anyway. At least let us come inside, Bhai Sahib."

He was standing with his hands on his hips, and ducking under his hands, I went inside. He stepped back and announced: "You were very courageous to come." I said: "Yes, but when you go to meet your brother, what is the need for courage? This is the first time I have heard that we need courage to visit one's own brother."

"I will talk about Bhoodan to the whole town and not speak with you? Only one brother's house gets left out?" From his eyes a stream of tears just burst forth. For two minutes he just kept looking at me. Where his drunkenness, his intoxication went, I don't know. He said: "You are blessed. I am just coming in five to ten minutes." And I said: "Ok." In the veranda were two or three chairs and we sat down. Then he went inside, put on dhoti-kurta and came outside.

He said: "Come on, tell me what is it you want to say." I requested: "You call all the town people. If there is going to be a gathering, it will be at your door." (In Bihar they always used the term darwaje - door.) "You must have heard about Bhoodan?" He was an educated man. I must have spoken to him for ten minutes. He asked if we wanted to drink tea, and we said we would have milk. I asked: "Can't we meet Bhabhiji (sister-in-law)?" He said: "Not here, there is parda here." And I said "Bharat has obtained independence and in your house there is still parda." He replied: "Yes. In one day, will you change everything?" I said: "No, we won't change it. We will go inside and meet her." We went inside and the poor lady would not remove her Gungat or speak to us.

We held the meeting there, and that gentleman gave 125 acres of land as Daan. That was the living proof of humaneness. As long as there is a human being, humaneness is there even if suppressed, hidden in some corner. In Bhoodan I came across many such generous incidents.

The challenge for me is that if you say there is Divinity in every atom, then how can you leave out any one person and move ahead. In Bhoodan Andolan there were many instances to test my devotion to the Divine and my faith in the divinity within each human being. Bhoodan taught me a lot. What I did not get to learn at the university, I got to learn in Bhoodan.

I had not done any Sadhana as such, but because of Bhoodan Andolan I went through a lot of penance. Girls and boys of all castes and classes used to travel with me, so the people would not let us go into their houses. They would keep us in the cattle sheds, where half the area was kept for the cattle and half for the grains. They would say: "You spread out your sheet on the grain on the floor and stay there." They would give us a thali of food under the tree in the courtyard, and they would say: "My goodness, what kind of a girl is this, she moves around even with men."

In Gonda, Bihar

This is another incident, also during the Bhoodan Yatra. The Yatra was going on in Gonda in Bihar and in one village the Thakur sahib said tonight we will have your talk. I went to the meeting place and found that Thakur sahib was having a thread ceremony for his son; he had called dancers for the celebration. He told me: "After the dancing program is over, you will give your talk".

I did not understand what I should do. There was music and dance and people were drinking. Lots of carpets were spread on the floor and lots of people were sitting and resting on the gaddi. It all looked very odd. The president of Congress of Gonda who had arranged the gathering was sitting there.

I asked him: "Can I speak about Bhoodan in an atmosphere like this, where there are dancers?" He was a little tipsy and said: "What is wrong? What is wrong, we are all sitting here?"

I saw a jeep driver that I did not know (he might have been half-Christian and half-Muslim), but I went up to him and asked: "Will you take us away from here right away?" He understood and said: "Bhen, we are all brothers and sisters of one Mother and Father; you don't worry I will take you away." So from there he took us to the railway station. We didn't have any money for our railway ticket, but he said: "Don't worry, have I not called you my sister?" We went into the station room and sat down. We had not eaten anything all day. He found bananas for us; nothing else was available there. He put bananas in my hand and said: "When the train comes I will buy the ticket and put you in the train. So that you don't feel indebted, I am giving you my address. At your convenience you can send me the money."

We got into the train. On returning I had it out with Lal Bhadurji. Lal Bhadurji was from U.P. and he was the state head of the Bhoodan Yagna Samiti. I told him: "Look how your head of the congress committee in Gonda behaved toward us. Is it because we ladies are from Maharashtra and do not wear parda? Is this the way they show respect for us that that they hold our Bhoodan talk with dancing girls? I will never go to any talk organized by congress workers."

The poor man started crying. Yes, it's the same Lal Bhadur Shastri who became our Prime Minister. I was with him for one week in Lucknow Zilla, and Vishwanath Pratap Singh another Prime Minister of India was the organizer of Allahabad. Our relationship goes back to that time, I have known him since then.

In Ranchi District, Bihar

We had gone for Bhoodan to a town near Ranchi Zilla or near Dhanbad. The town looked very odd. Why did they want a meeting here? The meeting was held, and after the talk on Bhoodan, we sat in the courtyard of the mandir. Some people brought milk and bananas; no other food was brought. I was wondering where we were going to stay, and why no one came to fetch us.

I didn't realize it, but the day of the meeting was their special day to offer the sacrifice of a virgin (Narbelli). They all came into the town and listened to the talk. I was quite happy to see so many people come to the talk, but what I didn't know was that they wanted to offer me as their sacrifice that night after 12.00 midnight.

My jeep driver, who was Muslim, went into the town for his meal and heard of the plans to sacrifice a virgin. He came running to me at night about 9.30 -10.00 pm, and said: "Bhenji sit in the car right away". I said "Why?" He said: "I'll tell you later, but sit in the jeep right away." I had with me Tukroji Maharaj's disciple. Prabhatai

Deshmukh, and a few other girls. He said: "It is a very serious matter, come right away. It is my responsibility to keep you alive." He was a nice man about 32 years; I was younger than he was. "I have to save you from the jaws of death; you come with me right away." He drove off fast through the jungle of South Bihar. I was alone with a Muslim driver and three or four ladies. After we had driven for about 45 minutes and had left the jungle, he stopped the car and said: "That was a village which gives Narballi; they had made full preparations to give you as the sacrifice, balli. That is why I asked you to leave fast and you were saved.

Uttar Bihar

In Uttar Bihar there was one Zilla in which for five days we got nothing to eat; the villagers would not give us anything to eat. We would sit in the temple and if we got bananas we would eat the bananas and potatoes baked in the fire. We have spent days eating that.

In Patna, Bihar

After three meetings, I had to catch the night train and arrive in Mahila Charka, Patna the next day to begin a padyatra at 6.00 a.m. Kalyanyi, a sixteen-year old girl from Bengal was there with me. We were sitting on a bench at the train station and fell asleep. The train left without us.

On inquiring from the stationmaster, we were told there is no other train due except the Goods train. We said:

"We will go in that train". "Will you go in the Goods train?" I said: "I have to". When the Goods train came, the stationmaster was not happy that I wanted to travel in a train not suitable for passengers. I explained our situation to the driver and requested that we be allowed to travel on the train. In the end the driver sahib agreed. I was so happy that now the word I had given to begin a padyatra, would be kept. The stationmaster gave me a sheet to help protect from the soot and smoke of the Goods train. The two of us sat on a small stool close to the engine. Soon we were surrounded by smoke and covered in soot.

When we arrived at our destination at 3:30 a.m., Prabhavati Chaudhury of Mahila Charka, Patna, was so disturbed wondering where I was that he was crying.

In Kerala

Kottayam Zilla in Kerala was the center of Communism and the villagers said: "We won't let your meetings be held here. We won't give you anything to eat." So we would take tapioca root, boil it, and eat it with bananas. I ran the camp in the city of Alawai in that way.

In Bhoodan if the Divine had not presented the difficulties, Vinoba would have done it. Once when we were walking through Kerala there was heavy rainfall, I was wearing a raincoat and had an umbrella. Vinoba was leading the Padyatra. He looked back and said: "Who is this wearing a raincoat and carrying a umbrella? Send that person to me." I went. He told me: "Nectarous rain is falling and what foolishness is this? Remove the coat." I took off the raincoat. "At the time of the coronation of king's, water is brought from the seven rivers. That was gross but this is subtle. Can't you see that God is showering you with that water?" I said: "Prabhu is doing it; so for hours we have to walk in this rain?" He said: "Yes." Vinobaji made us walk for three to four hours in heavy rain.

In the summer I often said: "I can't bear the heat." He showed us how to bear the heat. He said: "Bring an onion." So I brought an onion. Can you imagine an onion and me? I can't even bear the smell of it. "Cut it. Keep it in your shoes". We would keep it in our shoes. We used to wear canvas shoes, so inside them we would put the onion slices. "Tie it on your head". We used to tie it on our heads. "Squeeze out its juice and apply it to your hands, smell it. Keep smelling it and keep walking." Through the heat of the month of May, Vinobaji made us walk. He made us walk in the rain. He made us walk in the cold of the winter. He made us walk in the heat of the summer.

So there would be four to five meetings, and one would be walking in the dust, the sand, the mud. I have stayed in all that, and that was thanks to Vinoba's blessings.

In Punjab

An incident took place in Punjab in Patiala. Papsu Patiala had a bad name and its population was not ready to listen to the talk of non-violence, Ahimsa, of Bhoodan.

In Punjab there were two camps of Bhoodan. In one, Dhebarbhai was with me. He had come for one day and he left. For one camp Jai Prakashji had come.

There was also Lala Achintram, the father of Krishna Kant who is now the governor of Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad (and later became the Vice President of India). His father had great affection for me. Bhimsen Sacchar, Lala Achintramji and Dr. Ram Rakhe Sahib were the great leaders of that area in Punjab and spoke in favor of Bhoodan.

When we had to go to Papsu Patiala, Dada came. When we reached Patiala, the people said: "If you want to have a meeting, you conduct it, but don't bring your daughter, there could be violence." Dada said: "Is it so? Is it so dangerous that ladies should not go? OK, then Lalji do it this way. In today's meeting only organize a talk by Vimala. Dada won't talk. Ahimsa which does not go and confront Himsa, it is not Ahimsa."

At the meeting, there was a big crowd and many people were carrying thick sticks capped with iron. Lalaji was a tall, well-built person, not like Krishna Kantji. The talk was on Ahimsa and not on Bhoodan.

Some persons tried to stop the meeting two or three times. In the middle of the talk some people interrupted with loud comments, and made some offensive signs about woman. I stopped and said: "Speak out loudly what you want to say. If you want to curse, say it out so at least we will know how many curse words the people of Patiala know".

Dada was sitting quietly. As Lalaji and Dada were present, there was nothing to fear. Dada had said there would be no police at the meeting. So in an extremely tense atmosphere, the meeting took place and Prabhu gave us strength, so we lasted through the meeting.

In Maharashtra

An incident that required a lot of courage took place in Bombay on Chowpatty. It was a meeting of all parties, of all party leaders and there were not less than two-and-a-half to three lakhs of people. Sopan Mehta had written in Janma Bhoomi (Newspaper): "Vimalaben came and moved meetings from rooms and halls to the open grounds."

In Bombay there was a unique Victory March. Thousands of people would attend the meeting, but the meeting at Chowpatty was like a diamond in the crown.

The meeting began, and a stone was thrown by the communists that hit the speaker, Kamlaben, on the head. The communists troubled us a lot during the Bhoodan Andolan. Blood started pouring out of Kamlaben's head; I went to her and held her. When the stones were thrown, all the leaders, Mohraji Desai, Ganapati, Pinto, the leaders were guided from the stage. Kamlaben was taken to a hospital in an ambulance.

I was left on the dais all alone. My clothes were stained with blood, but I continued sitting on the dais. Someone had cut off the wires of the microphone and the loud speakers, but the meeting went on for another one-and-a-half hours. Some members of the audience caught the people throwing the stones and creating trouble and removed them. The meeting continued.

In another incident in Bombay, in the suburbs, near where the meeting was taking place, there was a coconut tree. Some people were sitting in that tree and from there threw a big stone. That stone landed next to me on a wooden stage. The stone made a hole in the stage. If it had come one inch towards me, my body would have been broken into pieces.

In Gujarat

There were many varied incidents and darshans during the yatra in Gujarat. In one place in Saurashtra, Vajubhai, Dhebarbhai, Narayankaka and I were staying in the house of a Khadi worker. I was given a small room on one side of the house in which to stay. Dhebarbhai and Vajubhai were staying in a small room on another side of the house.

At 11.00 P.M. after completing the last meeting we returned to the house. There was no electricity in that town, so they kept a lantern for us. I went into the room and lay down. One girl about nineteen-years-old put her face on her knees and was crying. I said: "What is it?" But she would not reply. I said: "Look, I have done four meetings and am tired now; I want to sleep. Meet me in the morning and we will talk." I turned round and went to sleep. Again she cried. So I got my and opened the door called Vajubhai. "Vajubhai please come." He came: "What is it?" I said: "Who is this girl who is crying here? What is this?" He asked: "Where? Who?" Vajubhai came inside. There was no one. I said: "She was sitting here, she was crying." He said: "Bhen (Sister), you are very tired, you must have been seeing something." But that crying young girl kept me company all night. I did not have in mind that it could be a spirit. She would not come close to me, but would sit at a distance and cry.

The next day I told Vajubhai: "Someone has been murdered here. When the house was being built, the son's marriage had just taken place, and there were builders who were doing construction work. The daughter-in-law's murder took place. I am describing this because though•I have little faith in ghosts and spirits. such incidents of seeing ghosts and spirits have occurred numerous times. They did not do any harm and I did not have the time to pay attention to them.

Just as I did not give any importance to my visions and experiences, in the same way I did not give any importance to these visions. I had no time even to be afraid. I was so occupied in living that I had not time to give attention to such incidents.

In Assam

I learned some Assamese. I used to start my talks with the words: "Moi Assam arhame ausome husalie - I am the daughter of Assam". I had a great love for Assam.

In Assam, the Suvarna Shri River would flood ten to twelve villages. The villages would be swept away. So Baidev Amalprabhaji, Guntaben, Himaben Bhorai and I thought that we should build a dam on the river.

Vimal Prasad Challiya was the Chief Minister then. We went to him with our idea, and he said: "Bhaidev, see the report of my engineers. On that river you cannot build a dam." I said: "We don't believe it cannot be built. It can be built. Now look, Challiyaji, when the dam is built, then I will come and show you my face." He was a very good person. We used to stay with his family. He was a very brave man and he used to respect and listen to Baidev and her elder sister Dangar Baidev, Jurubaidev.

So we went to North Lakhimpur to Maitri Ashram and then worked out a full strategy. I suggested we do a padyatra along the banks of the river. We will meet the villagers and ask them, not the engineers, to build the dam. So we started on the Yatra.

On the twentieth day we found one old man in a village who said: "Yes, why not, a dam can be built." "Where?" He showed us where the dam could be made.

A drummer was sent around the village to inform everyone of the plan. When the villagers collected we made an announcement that we are going to build the dam. When people got to know about the dam, there was a rush of volunteers from all places.

We were living at the time in bamboo huts on the river bank, and I remember one night, maybe about a week after we had come, at midnight we heard the roar of a lion. It was a small hut; on one side was Baidev's bed and next to her was mine. I jumped up from the bed and said: "Baidev". She said: "Vimola that is nothing, that is a lion down there. He must have come to drink water." On hearing her reply, from as high as I had jumped, I came down to earth, realizing that we were at a height and lion was below.

In the morning when we got up and went down to the riverbank, we could see the paw markings of the lion. Baidev showed us the impressions that were those of a lion and those of a dog. So we stayed with the lion, with other animals, on the banks of Suvarna Shri River.

We made Suvarna Shri Nadi dam which was later called Vimola (that is how they pronounce Vimala in Assamese) Dam. We stayed there for about three months. We built the dam eight feet height and six feet wide; we built it of mud.

As we were building it, I kept up correspondence with Anna Sahib who assured us that if you make it, leave the job of making it permanent to me. So Anna came and made it permanent. After that, in the fourteen villages there were never any floods, and educational institutions were built there.

The dam is made of cement concrete now, and there is a description of it in some geography books. I have taken Kishan Singh Bhai and shown it to him. When I went there with Kishansinghbhai (it was 1972 or 1973) there was great joy in seeing the progress and prosperity of those fourteen villages.

Bhoodan In Perspective

Bhoodan Accomplishments

Many people do not realize the full implications of the Movement that was conducted by Vinobaji and the Bhoodan workers – do not realize it was a step taking humanity in a new direction.

The Sarvodaya Movement carried me from one end of the country to another. I came to know the India in flesh and blood that I had earlier known only through books.

In seven years, I went round the country three times. I addressed meetings. The smallest audience consisted of 25,000 people and the largest gathering consisted of 2,50,000 people. The yatras I led, collected one hundred thousand acres of land (1,00,000 acres) and distributed it among the landless tillers.

It was a marvelous period, a period with a sense of fulfillment.

If somebody wants to visit today, they can visit the hundreds and thousands of villages where the land was redistributed. Income increased, there are village industries, schools have been opened, mobile health clinics and mobile libraries are operating. It is a different India you would visit, not the cities and towns. People living in Indian cities do not know India. It is only people like us who have walked through the villages, slept in the huts of the poor, eaten with them for days and months and years together; we know what real India is.

Working in the Bhoodan Movement deepened my faith in the Divine and deepened my trust in man, in human beings. If only you know how to reach the goodness concealed in each human heart, you can handle the economic and political problems through love and compassion.

It was hard and exhausting work for the body but otherwise exhilarating. There used to be opposition, blackmailing; it was not roses all the way. There were thorns that sometimes would pierce, but on the whole it was a very fulfilling period of my life.

Sarvodaya expects the inner development of the individual and the outward social changes to go hand in hand. We cannot sacrifice the individual for the sake of society or on the other hand wait for the individual and not take up the social issues. Sarvodaya philosophy cares as much for means as it cares for the ends to be achieved through those means.

We were creating new history, yet we were not aware that we were creating new history. Hundreds and thousands of acres of land have moved from the hands of the owners to the tillers of the land - that is not an ordinary event. Reconstruction of rural economy through the participation of the people is not a very common event in the world.

If somebody made a sociological, economic, and political assessment of all the projects and work done in Bhoodan villages, the results of how much has been done in the last twenty years, without the political and administrative power at our disposal would be surprising.

Though I stopped work in the Movement in 1963, when I visited Gurusarai in 1987, a man, after listening to my talk, came to me and wanted to make a donation to Bhoodan. He offered me two-and-a-half acres of very good land on the banks of river Ganga for Bhoodan. When I asked him how he knew of me, he said he had heard of me from his father. So though I did not go there for Bhoodan (Bhoodan was not active in 1987), someone wanted to make a donation. Out of his turban came the piece of paper, the deed of land that he was going to donate.

Dissatisfaction Creeps In

Bhoodan Yatra was becoming a tale of Victory. On the individual level, in spite of the Yatra being a tale of success, I was not feeling satisfied. On all sides of the Movement, there was glory and more glory, as if some chains of success were slowly being put on the Revolutionary Movement. Everyone was talking about cooperation and agreement. The members of the Congress Committee became members of Bhoodan Committee, but from within there was a feeling that this agreement rings of hollowness, of shallowness. I felt that these people who are saying yes, who are agreeing, are not understanding what Vinobaji has to say, and are agreeing in spite of that.

Those who were giving donations of land, were not giving it out of understanding that the whole system of ownership of land has to change. They were not donating the land to change the very principles of ownership of land. They didn't realize that land should belong to the tiller, land should be in the hands of the tiller, fruits of labor should be in the hands of the laborer. Without that, no lasting change could take place in the lot of the landless laborer, and if that does not happen then democracy cannot take root in India.

This aspect of Vinobaji's philosophy, these ideas which were shared during his talks, had not caught on; I saw this clearly. There was praise of Dada's talks, there was praise of my talks, but from within a hidden current of dissatisfaction was flowing.

If the government of India had realized that through class cooperation, Vinoba had wanted to take the country towards real socialism, real Sarvodaya, they would not have missed this golden opportunity that was offered to the country.

We achieved through Bhoodan a replacement of the psychology of class conflict, class hatred and class violence by class cooperation, goodwill, and mutual trust. This replacement of motivations has a tremendous potential and is a tremendously important factor in human growth.

If the government had taken advantage of the atmosphere that Vinoba had created, had taken advantage of the consent and backing of the people behind Bhoodan and Gramdan, and had followed it up by proper legislation we would have marched much ahead of what we have done today.

But there is nothing to feel depressed about, for all of us are soldiers in non-violent social change with the foundation of love, truth, and compassion. And the fact remains that behind Bhoodan is the power of non-violence, love, and truth and not the power of violence, compulsion, and depriving the people of their independence.

The speed of Bhoodan revolution is bound to be different from the speed of a revolution based upon Marxism or Leninism. For here we do not want to sacrifice our human character and moral values for quick results.

Through the other way, we may have quick results, but a person who kills another, who spills the blood of his brother becomes psychologically corrupt and benumbed. Sensitivity becomes benumbed by using hatred and violence.

A human being has to grow and to become educated to new understanding. Human beings are not like stones that you can lift from one place and put them into another.

There have been two factors involved in the revolution of the Soviets in Russia, and the communes in China. One is the violence and second is the compulsion of the government or the state behind all efforts.

There has been no compulsion in Bhoodan Movement either through guns and bullets or through legislation. There has only been an appeal to the goodness of man and an appeal to the compassion that resides in his heart.

Leaving The Andolan

Accident in Jeep

I was returning from Nepal, in December 1959, with M.P. Shri Koirala. We were in-between Janakpuri and Raksaul. It was at night and there was a lot of rain.

I used to like to sit in the front seat near the door. Jai Prakashji often said: "Vimalben likes to sit on the suicide seat." The driver would be on one side of the jeep, someone else would be seated in the middle, and I would be seated near the door. I would not sit in the back, and if Jai Prakashji himself was there, with great insistence he would make me sit at the back, but my seat of preference was the front one.

Because of a short circuit the lights of the jeep went out. The jeep skidded and I was thrown out of the jeep. I fell 25 to 30 feet down into the valley. The Nepali Gurkha of Koirala Sahib, in spite of the dark night, went down into the ravine just following the noise he had heard, because when I had rolled down the hill I hit against a tree. He had heard that, so he climbed down and brought me up. That is the time when my ear and bones between the inner ear and brain were all broken. In that accident I was on the verge of death.

From there they took me to Rauksal, and Shri Narayan Singh asked Shri Babu, Chief Minister of Bihar, for his helicopter. I was taken by helicopter to Patna.

The car accident brought about limitations. Though my ear became better and hearing improved, many weaknesses remained. It was difficult to bear the heat. If I stood anywhere I would feel giddy; if I stayed in the heat for long, I would start vomiting. If I went where there was a rush or in a place that was very congested like a railway platform, then I would feel giddy. So there were limitations: can't go in crowds, can't work in the heat or in dusty places. I thought, now I can't do Bhoodan work.

There was also another reason. There was an attack by China, first on Tibet and then on India, and there was dissatisfaction in the mind over the approach taken by Sarva Seva Sang and Sarvodaya Samaj. There was dissatisfaction in the mind over it. I had told Vinobaji on the first day itself, that if I feel I can not do the work, I will leave in peace.

So in 1962 I told Dada that now I am leaving the Andolan work. A lot of limitations have come in the body, I can't travel around. If Dada or J.P. asked I would tell them that a stream of dissatisfaction was going on within me, but I felt that such a great work is going on for the country. I wanted to give it as much support as I could, but I could no longer do it.

So I had to leave Bhoodan and find somewhere to stay. Jainendra's friend, Madam Sophia Wadia said: "In Bangalore, I have several bungalows; Jainendra you keep one for Vimala let her stay there in peace." But I needed to stay in a cool place. Gokulbhai got to know of my situation and said: "Why should Vimal go there; I will make an arrangement for her in Abu."

Vimalaji always says she learnt a lot from her days in the Bhoodan Movement and association with the great being Sant Vinobaji. After his passing away Vimalaji wrote expressing her feelings for Vinobaji, whom she described as the modern Sage.

The Modern Sage

He combined and coordinated
Science and spirituality

He was always engrossed in the
Silence of pure beingness

He was a Sage who knew Vedas and
Who had realized the Truth.
He bore the name Vinayaka
Salutations to the one whose face glowed
With the joy of inner peace

Doing his deeds with complete detachment
Having been dissolved in the stream of the Lord's love
The learned Sage was Truth incarnate
The self illuminated knower of
The wondrous sweetness of the Gita
The innocent son of Mother Gita
Salutations to the one whose face glowed
With the joy of inner peace

He who brought out the Saamya Sutras
He who guided us towards Saamaya Yoga
He who illuminated the path of social morality
Salutation to the one whose face glowed
With the joy of inner peace

Translated from Sanskrit, 1995

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Chapter Five

Contributions In The Field Of Spirituality

The Light Intensifies

Evolution of a revolutionary approach
to spirituality,
based on the brilliant integrity
of discovering essential truth
for oneself,
through keen, deep observation and
experimentation,
blessing every moment in life
with that sacred truth.

May All Beings Become God Intoxicated

Dear Ones! Why don't you worship
your own pure Being, the Atmaram?

If you worship your own pure being,
perception awakens and
the sense of separateness is forgotten.
Within and without Lord Ram is ruling and
fears of this world disappear forever.

Dear Ones! Why don't you worship
your own pure Being, the Atmaram?

"Matter" and "Life" are the language of the mind
through which it weaves a web of illusion.
When you worship your own pure Being
the illusion is dispelled
and the Lord's love flows through you.

Dear Ones! Why don't you worship
your own pure Being, the Atmaram?

The essence of the Lord's love overflows,
spreading all over the universe.
Dissolving completely the sense of 'I' & 'Mine'

Vimal's words are flowing out of this love
May all beings become God intoxicated.
…… *Vimala*

Chapter Five

Contributions in the field of Spirituality

The Light Intensifies

INTRODUCTION

Vimalaji describes the years after moving to Mount Abu as a period of Sadhana or intensive self-inquiry. During this time she met many saints, had a chance to be on her own and to go deep within. Her own inner development flowered and many spiritual incidents took place.

When Shri Gokulbhai Bhatt, a colleague in the Land Gift Movement heard Vimalaji was looking for a place to live, he *made arrangements for her to stay in a house in Mount Abu that belonged to the Maharaja of Sirohi (town close to Mount Abu).*

Early Days In Mount Abu

When Vinobaji heard that I was leaving Bhoodan, he sent a telegram and called me. He was in Assam. We discussed my decision to leave the Andolan. While we were talking, he called for Radhakrishna Bajaj and said to him: Radhakrishna, I have Rs. 5,000/-. My father gave funds to me and to my brothers, Balkoba and Shivaji. They spent their funds, but I did not spend mine. Give that to Vimal.

I was leaving the Andolan. I was going to live in Abu and Vinobaji was thinking about all the necessary arrangements: "How will she go? How will she take her luggage and go to Abu?" His thinking was correct, because to take the luggage by truck from Benares to Mount Abu was costly; the truck driver charged Rs. 2,000/-. Lokendra Singh of Bijnor and Parvati Dhawan took the luggage to Abu. At that time I did not know about the house at Abu that Gokulbhai had arranged for me.

This is how great Vinobaji was - like Jai Prakash's greatness, Prabhavati's greatness. In this way people looked after me. Who to call mother? Who to call father? Who to call what? Who did not do something to help me?

Whether it was Tukroji Maharaj or Krishnamurti or Vinobaji or Dada.

So Vinobaji said: "Ok, it is all right, this wish that you have for Sadhana, for solitude, go. But Life will not let you live in solitude. You are going with the hope of living in solitude, but that will not be. Even I did not want to travel but Bapu (Gandhiji) left, and destiny caught me by the neck, woke me up and is getting work done by me. Even if you go underground, down to the seventh layer - the work that the Universal Consciousness wants to get done through you, it will get done. You will never to be able to go back to anonymity. You have a fire in you and the Supreme Intelligence shall see how to use it." Tukroji Maharaj had written: "Your birth is not for solitude." Maheshanand Giri Maha Mandaleshwar wrote: "Your life is like a bright light of guidance for many; so why do you want to stay in solitude? This pull towards aloneness that you have does not synchronise with what the Divine wants to do through you." Everyone tried to discourage me. Krishnamurti also said: "Do you think you can go back to anonymity now? You can't. What Life had given unto you, will be exacted from you again. As much as Life has given you, Life will take it properly, whether you wish it or not. It is not under your control."

I did not say anything to Krishnamurti or the others, but when Baba said that destiny will catch you by your neck and make you work, I said: "Baba if you do not want to give a blessing, why are you giving me a curse?" He said: "Is this a curse? The same thing happened to me, I had to do the work; even you will have to do it."

Job Offer

When I was working in the Bhoodan Andolan, I was not a member of Sarvodaya Samaj or of Sarva Seva Sangh. I did not take money from them; nor did I take money from Dada. From January 1953, Hanuman Prasad Poddar used to send me Rs.200 per month. I managed my personal expenses out of that money and was able to work in the Andolan. If Bhoodan funds were used to pay for travel tickets necessary for the work, I accepted that, but would not take any money for personal use. I used to give a lot of attention to all this.

After leaving the Bhoodan Andolan, I wrote a letter to Hanuman Prasad Poddar: "Now that I have stopped working in Bhoodan Andolan, please do not send me the Rs.200.00 you used to send for my daily expenses. As I have stopped working, I no longer have the right to receive it." After refusing the funds I had been receiving, I thought I would have to take a job. Only this one time in my life, I had the idea of taking a job.

In the Women's college I attended, there was an English Professor Shri Devi Naidu who became the Principal of Hyderabad Women's College in Andhra Pradesh. She had heard my talks in Dandhra. I wrote a letter to her: "Shridevji, Jeevan dhara – the direction of my life has changed; I will have to do something for my maintenance." I got a letter back from her: "What is the need for you to ask? You just come; you will easily get a job as Professor." As she had great affection for me and she knew my love for languages, I received a letter of acceptance from her.

I wanted to speak with Dada, who was with Vinoba, so when I went to meet Dada, I had to go to the residence camp of Vinoba in Assam (November, 1962). He had just returned from Pakistan. I went to speak with Dada. Maybe Dada spoke about me to Baba, and then Baba called me. By then I had been living in Abu for maybe one year.

Vinobaji asked: "What Vimalanand, are you thinking of taking a job?" "Yes " "You also received an order so soon for a job?" "Yes." I was very happy. Vinobaji asked: "Where is it?" I ran to get it, and explained that Shri Devi Naidu had been my professor in college, and she had accepted my application. He took the letter, looked at it and tore it up. "Your life is not for doing a job. As long as Vinoba is alive, you will not need to earn a living. How much money do you need? How much money do you want? Arrangements will be made. What do you want? Whenever you need some money, write one post card; that is sufficient."

I did not think again about taking a job. I felt that since I am not doing any service for society, I should be earning money for my livelihood. That is why I thought of a job, but when Vinobaji said not to think about a job, I gave up the idea.

Offer of a House

By then I had left the life of Bhoodan Andolan and extensive travelling behind me, and I had not imagined that I would have to travel again. I thought I'd come to Arbudachal (ancient name for Mount Abu) and live quietly; I had come to Mount Abu with this hope. However others had warned me that this could not be so. I went to Abu to live and I thought: "As nobody knows me here, I can live in silence."

The house in Abu belonged to the Maharaja of Sirohi (district in the state of Rajasthan). Gokhulbhai Bhatt, a member of Bhoodan Andolan, had remained the C.M. of Sirohi, and he made many improvements in Sirohi Rajya. The Maharaja of Sirohi respected him a lot. When Gokulbhai Bhatt was looking for a place for me to stay in Abu, the Maharaja offered a house.

The house had been built for his children's English governess. When the governess no longer lived there, many saints and princes stayed in the house. Prakash Anand Godaliya Maharaj used to stay there and many princes came there to meet him (Godaliya Maharaj and Swami Japanandji of Ramakrishna Ashram were good friends. In his youth, Swami Japanandji was in the company of Swami Vivekananda and was the student of Swami Brahmanandji.)

At the time I came to Abu, Prakashanandji was not alive, but at the time of taking Samadhi he said: "Don't sell this house and don't let any householder live here; the person who is to stay in this house will come." So for fourteen years the house was vacant. The glass of the ventilators was broken, there was no arrangement for water, there was no light, nothing was there. It was a big house with walls eighteen feet high. The local people used to say: "Booot Pret," spirits live there.

Life in Shivkuti

The spiritual development and growth continued, and if I were to tell you the truth, Gyaneshwari and Gyaneshwar Maharaj became my life. In 1963, when I had a chance to live in Mount Abu, my inner consciousness - chetana, began to keep company with Gyaneshwar and Ramkrishna. It was a patched-up body that I took to Mount Abu. Yet with all these difficulties, I was able to sit for three hours daily in meditation.

During the Bhoodan Andolan for about eight to ten years, I did not eat ghee, did not take milk. I felt that as the village people do not have these things, I will not have them either. Eating the food offered in Bhoodan, traveling in all kinds of vehicles, and walking in harsh weather, I did considerable damage to my body. I was injured in accidents and had several operations: appendix, tonsillitis, and the ear operation.

Living in Abu in the early days was quite an adventure. In the daytime, monkeys used to come and make a big rumpus. One day I was rolling out the chapattis and cooking them. I was cooking them in a dhun, abstraction, and as each one was cooked, I put it aside. A monkey was sitting behind me, and as I cooked a chapatti and set it aside, he would take and eat it. In the end when I finished cooking all the rotis, cleaned my hands and looked back, there was not one roti.

There was no netting on the doors and windows, none of the doors could be closed properly. There wasn't anything for us to sit on, neither a rug nor a carpet - nothing.

In the night a commotion would take place! Wherever we kept utensils, bang, bang, bang, somebody would drop them. There was only one cupboard, and if any rotis were saved, we would put them in a box in the cupboard. From the cupboard, the box would be removed and all the food would be thrown away. Nobody would be seen, only the noise. So I thought that yes, there is some inhabitation here. Somebody is living here from before. So a decision had to be made, what to do? I said:"Either you live here or we will live here." As night approached and the commotion began, I began saying: "Ram Raksha Path" (a mantra). Parvatiben was there. (Parvatiben had come to stay with me in Benares.) I told Paravati to also begin saying the strotra loudly. We used to go holding each others' hands into the room where we heard a noise, and would recite Ram Raksha Path. This was the kind of atmosphere in which we lived.

Because of economic restrictions, we had to live a very simple life; even our eating habits were very simple. There was no question of purchasing milk but we could eat vegetables once a day. We used to eat mung beans; we would soak the .mung beans and eat them with rice.

Fifteen or twenty days after we moved in, an individual with a silver-capped walking stick, khadi cap, khadi kurta called out: "Is Vimalben living here?" "Yes". "My name is Trikamlal Mahasukhram (father of Kalyanbhai). Parmananda Kapida has written to me about you from Bombay; he is my friend. From today I am your appointed guardian."

So I got a guardian. He came and within two days Prabhavatji came. Jai Prakashji had said: "Vimalaben has gone to stay in Abu; go check out the arrangements, and see how things are."

There was no water in the house and no well nearby. Outside the gate, across the road in the compound of Sophia School, there was a water tap and from there, Prabhvatji, Parvatiji and I carried water up to the house.

Prabhavatji must have written a letter asking for help, because soon rupees two thousand reached us. We were able then to order a water connection. Prabhavatji said: "Make the application. You have to request a water connection and an electricity connection. Jai Prakashji is afraid that this daredevil (he called me daredevil) will go and live anywhere." He said: "Come on, let us make some arrangements for her."

Help came from many sources. One day Radhakrishna Bajaj came to Mount Abu and decided that he and Anusuyaben would start sending me Rs.100/- per month. Chandraben and Vasubhai Parekh also started sending me Rs.100/- per month.

We received a Charkha, and we used to spin on the Charkha nearly every day for five years. (Cotton yarn that was spun on the Charkha or spinning wheel would be made into cloth.) During the four hours we were spinning cotton on the Charka, we recited chapters of Gitaji.

Trikambhai had a very nice way of helping us. Once when he came, he brought mosquito nets for each of us and explained to Parvatiben how to put up the nets. On another occasion Trikamlal Sheth purchased four sewing machines for us. So we were able to teach sewing to ladies, and we received some money for the lessons.

Trikambhai performed a special service in Abu. He used to deliver supply of grains sufficient for one whole year, to the Saints and Mahatmas living in the caves in Abu. (Even his son, Kalyanbhai, did not know he was doing this.) He would roam through the nearby hills, search the caves for Saints and Fakirs, deliver the grains and check if any of them needed medical help. That was his very much-loved work. He stayed at Mount Abu for about four to six months in the year and did considerable good work.

Shankarlal Banker used to come to study Gyaneshwari with me. Anusuyaben did not come, but she used to call me. They had a wooden bed made for me and brought us our first rug. Before that we had nothing to sit on.

Kundalini Awakening

In the Sadhana Kal, period of intensive inquiry, all the energies became one-pointed and concentrated.

During the period from 1963 to 1968, fragrance would emerge from the body. If the people living with me would wash my hair, the water would be filled with the fragrance. In the garden where the water was thrown, the fragrance would still be there for three days. That spot would be full of fragrance, even though the water had dried up.

The room would be filled with different types of light and the conversation with different great beings in the night would take place – these kinds of happenings began to take place.

The signs of awakening of Kundalini were evident in 1965. This was a period full of happenings, of divine real life experiences and visions.

Period Of Deep Study

Introduction to Jain Darshan

Shri Trikamlal Sheth was a Jain who introduced Vimalaji to the Jain philosophy and to many munis or monks. He also introduced Vimalaji to the writings of Shrimad Rajchandra

. . .

who became enlightened at a young age. Though a Jain from his mother's side, he was not accepted by the Jain community or the Jain munis. He did not quote from the scriptures; he talked in simple terms straight from the authenticity of his own life, without claiming any authority. He used to say: "I say it is so, because I have seen it to be so. Like Mahavira I talk out of my own life."

I had my first glimpse of Jain philosophy through Trikamlal Sheth. Bapuji (Trikamlal Sheth) used to take a walk around Nakki Lake in the mornings. He would recite "Apurva Awasar" in the morning and when he made the second round of Nakki Lake in the evening, he would recite in full "Atma Siddhi Shastra." I asked him: "Bapuji, what are you reciting; what are you doing?" He said: "I am reciting from the works of Shrimad Rajchandra. Do you want to understand them?" "Yes." So in the morning after taking the round, he would say:"Make coffee or make lassi," and he would recite "Apurva Awasar." Then he explained in Hindi what he had recited. He put the Gujarati book in my hand and said: "Follow what I am saying and if you keep reading, you will pick up Gujarati." So that is a how I was introduced to Shrimad Rajchandra.

Rajchandbhai had sailed from the human consciousness into the ocean of the divine, never to come back to this shore of the conditioned consciousness. I have not studied all the books, but I have seen him through whatever of his literature I have read. It is as clear to me, as the sunshine on a sunny day, that here is a person who had transcended all the limitations of conditioned human consciousness. He could have accepted the tradition and called himself a muni and the whole society would have worshipped him. They would have accepted everything, if he had bowed down to the tradition. But he organized neither his own sect nor his own tradition. You know, it is not only with Rajchandra or Krishnamurti, but it will be the case with every human being who arrives at the fountain of Life. When such a person does arrive at the fountain of Life, the fountain of Life cannot be put into the framework of scriptures, shastras, traditions and patterns of behavior."

Bapuji read to me many letters from Shrimad Rajchandra to his student Sobaghbhai, and Laghu Raj Swami's "Upadesh Amrut" Granth. I had an interest in reading, studying. He used to say there are so many Gujaratis living here, if you get to know Gujarati, it will be good.

In the summer months, friends would get together and study Shrimad Rajchandra's literature. Parmanand Kapadia used to come, and with him his daughter Gita. Suryakant Parikh also came in the summers. There would be evening tea at Anusuyabhen's bungalow, where a big gathering assembled. Everyone would sit in silence for about three hours and then would study books by Rajchandra.

Bapuji took me to Ahmedabad to meet Pandit Shuklaji who explained Karma granth, Prakaran granth, and Jain Darshan. He took me, also, to meet Ramnikbhai Modi, Punya Vijayaji, Bhadranka Vijayaji. Trikamlal Sheth's life was full of Satsang. I am very grateful to him. So many people have helped.

Night and day, even here in Abu, I studied the books of Jain religion. So the Abu library was increasing and expanding; I kept on reading and the library kept on growing.

Discussions with Maheshanand Giri

I had many discussions with Maheshanand Giri of Shankar Math (in Mount Abu); I felt joy in discussing things with him. He was an individual with an independent way of thinking even though he was part of an organization. He had a special style of talking; he would say: "In the Upanishads it is given like this, and respected Adi Shankaracharya has interpreted this Mantra like this, but in my observation this meaning does not fit. So according to my understanding, according to my buddhi, this is the meaning." That was is style of speaking.

He came to Shivkuti and borrowed many books by J. Krishnamurti. "Oh!" I said. "You will read these in Shankar Math?" (Swamiji has his Sanyas ashram in Delhi; his main peeth is in Benares.) He replied: "Yes, why wouldn't I read them there?" The willingness of the Shankar Math to explore new ideas came into question when, in 1966, he celebrated the feast day of Adi Shankaracharya. He planned a large celebration and called many Sanyasis from all over India. The Swamis came from Shankaracharya sects: Giri, Puri, Bharati, Anand Ashrams etc. He called me and said: "Bhenji, you have to give a talk at the celebration." I said "Will all these Sanyasis let me come?" He answered: "We will see."

I went to the Gathering, and to give the talk started to climb up on the stage, when the Sanyasis sitting on the stage, got up and announced: "A woman cannot climb up here. She cannot sit on this Asana, on this Vyas Peeth!" Swamiji said: "Why cannot she sit here? Will Vedanta and Advaita proclaiming - all are one - only remain in the books? Is it because she is not wearing saffron-colored clothes that you refuse her? Do we have the right to say she is not a Sanyasin and only we are Sanyasi's? After giving it much thought, we have called Bhenji here to give a talk. Bhenji will definitely climb up to the stage." They said: "This cannot be; we will not sit here." "Then you may go if you want; after the Meeting I will make arrangements for you to leave, but Bhenji will climb up on the stage." I asked: "Swamiji why are you entering into a disagreement? Just put a chair here and I will sit down here. What difference is it, up or down?" He said: "Bhenji it is not a question of you or of me or of them, it is a question of living Vedanta. If Vedanta, Advaita, is lived in this way, then Bharat will be spoilt and Vedanta will be destroyed.

Swamiji made me give a talk. When I walked on the stage, the Sanyasis came down from the dais in anger. After four hours when the talks were over, Swamiji called a car for them and with great respect he saw them off.

Because of the way he conducted himself and because of this incident, he had to give his resignation from the post of Mandala Ishwar Paad.

He was the first secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and at their first Conference. Tukroji Maharaj had been there, so when Tukroji Maharaj came to Abu, he would meet Swamiji; there was great friendship between them.

Encounters With Great Beings

First Encounter with Krishnamurti

In December 1956, I there, Achyutji served as my host. Achyutji told Dada: "When you are not here, then I am Vimalabai's host." Ramdhar Mishra and Achyut Patwardhan used to stay there, and Dr. Kale also had stayed at Achyutji's house.

At that time Jiddu Krishnamurti was in town giving talks. Rao Sahib asked me: "What, Choti Amma, are you coming to listen to Krishnamurti?" (Friends used to call Dr. Anne Besant, Amma, so whenever Rao Sahib would meet me, he would call me Choti Amma, little mother, as a way to tease me.) I asked: "Who is Krishnamurti?" Just as I had not read anything about Gandhiji until 1953 and Sarvodaya until 1954, I had not read anything about Theosophy. I had not read anything nor seen a photo of Krishnaji.

Achyutji said: "Cancel one of your talks." So I cancelled a talk and went to the place where Krishnamurti was scheduled to speak. I sat in a corner and listened to his talk. During the talk, I felt that everything I thought and understood about spirituality, this great personality, Maha Purush, is saying in simple language. It gave me great joy!

After the talk, I returned to Achyutji's place. When we all sat to eat - Dr. Ramdhan Mishra, Rao Sahib, Achyutji and me - Rao Sahib asked: "Did you understand anything?" I said: "Yes, I understood everything. It is so simple. It is a verification of everything I had thought about, what I had understood. I received verification from a great personality, a world teacher, worthy of respect. I am very happy."

That evening when Achyutji and Krishnaji were going for a walk, Krishnaji asked: "There was a girl sitting in the far corner, who was that?" She is Vimala Thakar." Krishnamurti said: "She does not belong where she is, ask her to see me". When Achyutji came he said: "Vimalabai, Aamcha Babaji wants to meet you." Among themselves they called Krishnamurti 'Babaji." (They used to have some fun among themselves.) I said: "Why should I meet him? I have understood all he says. There is agreement between us, now what reason is there to meet? I won't meet him."

I attended Krishnaji's talk the next day, but announced: "I won't cancel any more talks I have scheduled, to attend Krishnaji's talks.

I listened to the talk and afterwards Krishnamurti came outside and told Achyutji: "Tell her to come and see me at 4.00 o'clock." I did not want to be disrespectful, so I went in the afternoon. This story is described in "Eternal Voyage," so I won't go into detail, but I said: "Sir, I don't have any problems or any questions, to ask you. He only said one sentence: "What, only if one has problems or questions should one meet another? Come on, come on, let us meet." He held my hand and took me inside, with great simplicity and straightforwardness.

So the entrance of Krishnamurti in my life took place. It was so unexpected and sudden, and there was no effort on my side.

Darshan of Ramakrishna Parmahansa

On Waisaki Purnima (full moon of Wesak), I took Parvati and Indu for boating on Nakki Lake in Abu. I was fond of boating; I could row myself. After boating, we returned home at 10.00 p.m.

One door of my room faces east. I made a small garden there. It was Prabhawati's wish; she said: "Vimalben, you plant some flowers, and I will sit here and spin the charkha. Jai Prakashji used to say: "Vimalben, I know if I leave before Prabha, she will not live in Bihar, she will come away to be with you." To make the garden floor, we brought up one stone at a time, filled it with earth, and planted the flowers. We did all the work ourselves and had great fun while doing it.

On that night after boating, I was asleep between 10.30 and 11.00. The door facing east, which had been locked from the inside, opened, and Ramkrishna Parmahansa came walking in. Against the north wall was a small cupboard and I had placed a photo of Lord Buddha on the cupboard. On that day I had put some flowers in front of the photo and burnt some agarbattis. Ramkrishna Parmahansa came near the photo and stood by it, resting his elbow on the cupboard. One corner of his dhoti was near his neck. I jumped from my bed and placed my head on his feet. His body was just like the body of any human being. His feet too were just those of an ordinary human being. When I put my head on his feet he placed his hand on my head.

He was talking in his native Bengali, saying: "I am very happy." He told me that there is no need to do the jaap of the Bhij mantra (Aum Rim Shrim Klim etc). I had read about doing jaap of the bhij mantra and felt a need to have some experience of Buddhist Tantra Yoga. I wanted to do Tara Devi Upasaana and for that the manta jaap is necessary. Thakur (Ramkrishna) said: “You have no need for that, neither do you have the need for fasting, nor for mantra jaap. Whatever is going on is OK."

During all that time his hand continued to rest on my head. While he was saying these few sentences, my intellect did not play any mischief and then my corrupted buddhi said: “This body had been burnt to ashes, had it not? Where did it come from?" When these thoughts entered my mind, his hand was removed and there was nobody there. I was sitting alone. Then I looked at my watch; it was 3.30 am

I continued sitting. I thought it was such a live touch; it could not have been an illusion, a projection of my sub-conscious. This could not have been a hallucination; then what was it? Only if somebody gives me the answer to this, will I believe that it is the truth. When somebody comes and gives me one Jabbakusum - the flower that Thakur used to offer to Devi - and gives me Sandesh (milk sweet) - the offering that Thakur made, then I will believe that what Thakur has said is true. Until that happens I don't want to take food or water.

When others at Shiv Kuti noticed that there was no movement in my room at the usual time I arose, Indu peeped in the room. She told Parvati: "Tai is sitting on the floor with her eyes closed. Paravati called: "Jiji, Jiji, Tai." "What is it?" "It is 6.00 o'clock and you are sitting on the floor; why is this?" I said: "Look today I'm going to keep sitting here, no tea, no water, no food, and no meals. Don't call me until I get up. You all have your meals, and I won't meet anyone." "What is wrong? Is your health bad? Is there any reason for the way you are behaving?" "I'll let you know in the evening, not now; now leave."

In the evening, as was his habit, Bapuji came. Sometimes he used to come before going to Nakki Lake, sometimes afterwards.

Paravati spoke to Bapuji: "I don't know what has happened! Didi has been sitting there on the asana, with eyes closed, since this morning. She won't move, won't talk, won't eat, will not allow us to enter inside her room." "Ok! There must be some reason." While this talk was going on, at 6:00 p.m., a Sanyasi wearing red clothes with a tinge of orange was coming up the stairs. In Bengali, he asked: "Is Vimaladevi living here?" I heard the voice and I quickly jumped up and went to meet the person. He was climbing the Shivkuti steps and was halfway up. I ran down the stairs and said: "Maharaj come, come." I brought him upstairs and sat him down and stood in front of him.

He did not say anything, but he took from his bag a Jabbakusum flower, only one, and put it in my hand. He then took out a small brown paper bag containing Sandesh, freshly made with the ghee touching the brown paper. He said: "Look, Thakur has said: "By showing you some falsehood, an illusion, what will he get? You know that Thakur does not like ladies to fast, does not like mothers to fast. Don't you know that Thakur does not like that?" " Yes I know." "Then why did you fast?"

I said: "Maharaj when did you come?" He said: "Yesterday evening." "Where are you staying?" "In Lal Mandir. This morning I got Thakur's instructions. " I said: "In Abu, such Sandesh is not made." He said: "What does it matter to you where it is made." I did Pranaam. Before I could say anything more, he got up quickly, ran down the steps, and left with great speed.

I cried a lot, I cried a lot. I took the Jabakusum in my hand and carried the bag of Sandesh. I said to Bapuji: "Come with me; we will go to Jaapanandji." He was surprised about what was happening. The whole day I had not eaten, had not anything to drink, and now wanted to talk with the Sanyasi? So we went to see Jaapanandaji, and I put the Jabbakusum and the Sandesh in his hands.

He said: "It has happened that you even test Thakur? You should have come and talked with me, Bhagawati. You even test Thakur?" I said: "No no! Who will do Thakur's kasoti? I wanted to make sure this is not my imagination."

So he took out the first Sandesh, broke it into three pieces. He gave one to Bapuji, one to me and one he put in his own mouth and said: "Go share the rest with everyone. Don't talk now, don't talk now, don't talk now." We left.

In the first five years in Abu, incidents like this took place, not just once, but numerous times.

Kalandar Shah

The relation with Kalandar Shah came about like this. A Muslim boy, Anwar, the son of Akbarbhai and Madinabhen came to a Bhoodan meeting. His mother, Madinabhen was singing bhajaans. This small boy got up and came to sit by me. He told Madinaben: "You are not my mother, she is my mother." For seven days he stayed with me during my yatra.

Years later Anwar had been to Madhusudan Maharaj and had Shakti Path. Some things went wrong. so Madinaben brought him to me.

While he was an officer in Amreli District, a Fakir came to him. The Fakir said: "Son keep this conch shell. The one with whom it is to stay will be reached through you. If it is meant for you, it will stay with you. If it is not for you, then there will some misfortune. He did not understand anything about what was said to him. However, within a week he lost his job.

As soon as he was able, he came straight to Abu to meet me, and described the meeting with the fakir. He gave me the conch shell and said this is of Siddha Kalandar Shah.

I had heard of Kalandar Shah's name. He was a very great Sufi Saint, a Siddha saint, who lived 300 years ago. I still have the shell with me. "Shankishwar Maharaj," I call it. And I have a plate of copper in which I keep the shell. It is still with me in Abu.

Because of the conch shell, Maha Purush Kalandar Shah walked through the door into my life. In those days, original Urdu poems emerged from consciousness seemingly of their own accord. I bought an Urdu dictionary and tried to understand their meaning.

Vimalaji wrote a poem, which has been translated and printed in "Friendly Communion", about one of her meetings with Kalandar Shah.

We received an invitation to visit Mount Girnar
We left around midnight
Escorting us was the Sufi Saint Kalandar Shah
Said he had been sent by Shri Sati Mataji

It was a black, frightening and awesome night

Dark clouds were spread everywhere
The rain was pouring down heavily

The mountain range of Garva Data was intoxicated with pride
That form of immense beauty was smiling
The dear Mother greeted us with great affection
The whole inner being lit up
In the light of the Dhuni flame, we say Yogi Jogender
And saw the mother of the Universe.
The pranas were filled with pure joy
And the mind rejoiced

We asked: "Prabhu, what made you remember us?"
We were overcome with love and so sent the invitation
We wanted to see you, and have a dialogue
As part of my own flesh and blood has come,
Garva Datar is overjoyed.

Now let us leave all that aside
and have a heart-to-heart communication
We entrust you, O wandering ascetic
The entire area of the mountainous range of Girnar-Brda
and

Guru Shekar-Shiv Valley

My Beloved One, the time for remaining in hiding has gone
Come out into the open and confront the emerging crisis.

I wondered how a Saint, who had left the body long ago, could appear to me as if in a body. When Briju Maharaj came to visit me, I asked him: "Baba, what is this, the body made of the five elements was burned in ashes, how could it come back?" "What do you think? Do you suppose that the Saint took the body of the five tattvas – the elements of earth, water, etc. - to come back? For a Saint it is sufficient to take the tattvas of agni, vayu and akasha – these three tattvas or elements are sufficient." I asked: "Is a body made from Vayu solid?" What need does a Saint (who has died) have for a material body?"

Maharaj explained all this in detail and said: "Don't consider this as magic. As you go deeper and deeper, these incidents will keep occurring." "Ok"! I got it, and along with it, the freedom, the release of understanding.

Bhagwan Vasudev

Lord Vasudev (Krishna) came to meet Vimalaji many times and she had numerous conversations with Him. Vimalaji would describe the incident the next day and others would make a note of it. However Vimalaji has recalled one particular incident.

Once Bhagwan Vasudev had come, He was wearing a necklace of pearls as large as the Boar berry. His hair was a mixture of black and white and was shoulder length. His age must be about fifty-five to sixty. He was wearing only pitambar (deep yellow coloured clothes); there was a shawl-like cloth lying on his shoulder. He came and had a talk, which is written down. The talk was in Sanskrit and was written in Sanskrit. What the talk was about, I don't remember today.

Vimalaji described some conversations with Lord Vasudev in a poem penned in 1978.

Here I am again!

In the 'Song Celestial' I had promised:
"Whenever needed, I shall return again and again."
I am coming, now I am coming //1//

As the cherished hopes of the good hearted
As the agonizing sighs of the down trodden
I have over shadowed the skies
I am coming, now I am coming //2//

Say unto my beloved ones
Send a call unto my devoted ones
I am coming, now I am coming //3//

Darkness, there shall be no more,
not even for an instant now
Delay there shall be no more,
not even for a moment now
I am spread over the skies,
I am coming, now I am coming //4//

Bringing the light, coming am I
I am coming, now I am coming //5//

And again in 1991, expressing her feelings.

The Engagement

Oh Mother! I have selected the dark skinned One*
as my bridegroom
I saw Him in my dream,
Wearing His crown with a peacock feather
And there was a garland of gunjan berries around His neck
Oh Mother! I have selected the dark skinned One
as my bridegroom.

He was wearing a bright yellow silk cloth around His dark waist

And the wooden flute was adorning His lips
Oh Mother! I have selected the dark skinned One
as my bridegroom.

Now He is my friend, my Beloved One
In the three worlds, He alone is my protector
Oh Mother! I have selected the dark skinned One
as my bridegroom.

He alone resides in Vimal's eyes
He alone resides in Vimal's speech
Oh Mother! I have selected the dark skinned One
as my bridegroom.

**Lord Krishna*

Swami Gangeshwaranand

Trikamlal Sheth took me to meet Swami Gangeshwaranand Maharaj, who has Kailash Ashram in Abu, and so a connection with Gangeshwaranand Maharaj began.

Gangeshwaranand Maharaj knew Tukroji Maharaj from childhood and had great affection for him. Tukroji

Maharaj used to come to Abu to stay. When he wanted to rest, he would say: "I will go to my Vimal."

Once when Swami Gangeshwaranand came to Abu, Krishnamai had bloody diarrhoea, so I took Mai to Swamiji. Through blind, he had amazing capacities. I was outside the room removing my chappals, when he asked: "Has Vimalbeti come?" Sometimes he said: "I recognise the person by the breath," and other times; "I recognise by the Naad." He and Swami Sharnananda both had the same way of recognising; they could recognise something from afar, from very far away.

Mangeshika Devi

In 1965, Lal Bhadhur Shastri sent me to Goa on a goodwill mission. The armed forces of India had done some ill regularity with women, on receiving such news I had been there. This was my first interaction with the people of Goa and when the Yatra was about to end for the last 3 to 4 days Dada had come, then an incident took place

During the visit to Goa, Dada and I had the opportunity to go to Mangeshika Mandir for Darshan. Dada loved going to temples for Darshan. Whenever went with Dada or with others for Darshan, I would stand outside and look after the chappals. Even if my mother was with me, I would say: "I don't need to go inside. There are so many idols outside, why go inside and see manmade idols? I am taking Darshan of God made idols."

I had an obstinate nature. Maybe even now my nature is obstinate.

We were traveling to the Mandir by car and when the car reached the temple, my body started shaking. Dada said: "What is happening to you? I replied: "I feel that I have been here before." (Even though, this was my first trip to the temple.) Then I described the temple: "There are so many steps to climb, on the right side is the temple, the temple has twelve pillars, then there are eleven or twelve steps. If you go inside the temple, there is a three-foot black pashaan, stone idol of the Devi. I feel I have come here and in this temple there are 12 pillars."

Dada questioned me: "What is this? You are sitting here in the car, describing a temple you have never seen?" I replied: "I can see the temple; I have been here. You go into the temple, have darshan and come back." Dada, Ravindra Kelkar and Kakokar Katmarker went into the temple, and they discovered it was like I had described.

Dada wanted to know: "What is happening?" I replied: "I don't know; I am saying I have been here before." He said: "How can that be? Before your birth I knew your parents, but I don't know anyone of your family who has been here."

When we returned to Bombay, Krishnamurti was there. I went with Dada to meet him. Dada narrated the incident to Krishnaji saying: "I know the girl's family has not been to the temple; none of us has been there. And yet without seeing the temple, she described what it was like. Krishnamurti said: "This is racial memory; in the end you are Hindu and Bharati. It is all lying inside. Her chitta is pure, that is why the sanskar came up." That is what he said.

(On another occasion when Vimalaji visited Goa, she was sitting outside a temple in a car while others went inside for Darshan. She recalled how her whole body from head downwards got wet, as if someone was doing Abhishek on her. In the temple, the Abhishek or washing of the idol with water and milk and recitation of mantras was going on at that same time.)

Description Of Inner Life

And so *Vimalaji's inner development continued, but it is very rarely that Vimalaji speaks about it. We get a glimpse of it through the poems Vimalaji has written. The poems began to be written in 1961 when Vimalaji first began her travels overseas and then later on when she stopped, from 1991 onwards. A few poems are given here below. They are from the collection of poems titled "Friendly Communion"*

From the poems, we get a glimpse to what levels Vimalaji had reached in her inner quest, which began when she was five, searching for God and jumping into the well in the hope of finding God there or running away to the forest in search of God, and how as she went deeper and deeper, she started living in the dimension of Samadhi, and yet carrying on all *her activities, living God intoxicated, yet behaving as an ordinary human being, and sharing all with other inquirers.*

Describing her inner experiences Vimalaji wrote:

In 1991

Oh What A Miracle!

The heavens have descended on the Earth
One has fallen in love with Love
One is in a mood to Love and be loved
I, the Lover and I, the Beloved one
Oh, What a miracle!

Can you imagine a Mai Khana without wine?
My glass overflows without any wine
Perhaps He himself has become the wine
I, the Drinker and I, the drink
Oh, what a miracle!

How do I tell this?
And to whom?
That the duality between Him and me has dissolved

The heavens have descended upon the earth
Oh, what a Miracle!

In 1992

Who Will Answer?

Where is lost all my knowledge?
Where is hidden all my knowledge?
Oh what has happened?
What remains is only Pure Beingness.
Mind and intellect have totally dissolved into Pure Beingness.

Whatever is seen, its name and significance is over now.
The virtues and vices have all proved false and illusionary.
Now there is only a roaring ocean of consciousness,
Which has no shores at all!

Am I inside this vast ocean of consciousness?
Or
Is that consciousness a vibration in my Being?

Who brings about this existence - the vast ocean of
consciousness?
Or
Vimal darshan?

Who is born of whom?
Or
Are the words "birth" & "being born" meaningless?

Who will answer?
Will anyone answer?

In 1993

Beyond the Shores of Death

Thee is not the slightest interest in meeting anyone, anymore
The gaze in these eyes has begun to reach out beyond the shores
of death

What remains now is only the residue of this body's Karma
Till that time, will remain the sense of beingness
And the constant flow of Karma
without any sense of being a 'doer'.

There is no more concern with relationships
or with renunciation
The gaze in these eyes has begun to reach out beyond the shores of death.

Whoever comes is met, and will be met
with the spirit of service and offering.
Whatever can be given, will be given.
There remains no burden of meeting or not meeting.
The gaze in these eyes has begun to reach out beyond the shores of death.

In 1994

The Story of Vimal's Life

If you look at my body, I am a human being
If you look into my being, I am the Supreme Eternity
I move through this human mind
But the chitta is free of all movements

For relating to the world, the intellect is used
But the Being remains merged in Cosmic Intelligence

Every relationship is accepted
But the Being remains absolutely untouched

Words are the wings of speech
Spreading which I take flight into the realm of Silence
Actions are the wings of Samadhi spreading which
I enjoy floating in Pure Beingness.

In the splendid mansion of Maa Sharada,
there is the dance of silence
In the spontaneous space of Pure Beingness
There is the blissful frolic of Samadhi

This is the story of Vimal's life
It is a legend of Samadhi Yoga
May her death also be in Samadhi
This is her innermost yearning.

In 1994

The Fulfillment

Now, what is it that we call "living"?
The body lives at its own speed,

It has a predetermined direction and pace
Death is that destined direction,
Each step taking one towards the grave.

The mind is now no more,
Personality has dissolved totally,
Just as the universe operates so does this body
It has no separate Karma left

There is an end to action because
There is no more a cause or purpose for action
There is now, no fruit to be gained and enjoyed
This must be the 'doer-less action' of Karma Yoga
This must be living in spontaneous Samadhi

"One saw with one's own eyes
the ceremony of one's own ending
And lo! What words can one use to describe
this joy of total ending?" .... Sant Tukaram

The fulfillment of human existence,
Is the manifestation of Divinity within,
Is not this, THAT only?

In 1995

Vimalanand

Now 'I' am not
'I' am not now
Whatever there is,
Is the cosmic Being

Now there is no Kriya
Neither is there any Karma
Whatever appears to happen
Is a sign of the Cosmic Being

Whoever does not understand that hint
Lives a dry and barren life
All signs are the touch of the Universal Being
That is the wealth and bliss of
Vimal consciousness

In 1995

Personified Non Duality

I have become personified non-duality
Nothing to be given to anyone
Nothing to be taken from anyone
I have become personified non-duality

I have allowed Death
to have a face to face encounter with me and
I have transcended Death
By allowing death to die away
I have become timeless

Love itself has become my lover
So I am out of the category of Beloved One
I have become personified non duality

In 1996

A Brief Introduction

Residing in the body and moving in the universe
This inner light roams in all the three worlds

This body is the cave
The whole universe is the court yard
The seven heavens are the neighborhood

This body is like the holy Himalayas
The pranas are like the birds
The Ida and the Pingala, are the Ganga and the Yamuna

The seven elements are the seven spheres
The divine light expresses itself in the seven spheres
Lord Narayan has ten expressions

The sound of Omkara resounds in every pore of my being
And its resonance pervades the thousands of nadis

With every breath, Truth is lived

Through every exhalation pure bliss overflows
In every breath sways the pure energy of Goddess Jagadamba

The body is a temple, in it is lit the lamp of the Pranas
The Atman is idol of the cosmic Lord himself

In the purified village of the sense organs
In the mighty royal mansion of the five pranas
resides the Lord
Self luminous and self realized

The form is Vimal
The name is Vimal
The karma is Vimal
The dharma is Vimal
This is just a brief introduction of mine.

In 1997

The Mystery

The unchanging Brahma
The vibration-free Bindu
The silence of the sound

The quietude of the word
The mystery of the appearance of individuality
The mystery of the disappearance of personality
'ISNESS' the expression
PRESENCE – the fulfillment

In 1998

Life Auspicious

One day just like that
The Lord of the Universe called out to me.

There and then the heart started overflowing
with the presence of Sat – Chit – Anand

Togetherness with the Truth,
gave the gift of fearlessness
And the consciousness remained continuously
in the state of awareness

Joy sprang from each and every cell of the being
And Lo! the life became auspicious

In 1999

The Flight Of The Swan

The impermanent form of the physical body
My beloved bestowed upon me to play with
Presuming it to be a castle I lived my life
Full of play and laughter

The impermanent form of the physical body
My beloved bestowed upon me to play with
This hut has a tiny courtyard surrounding it
That is the mind, so dear to me
I lit the lamp of understanding
and lo the self was ablaze with wisdom

The impermanent form of the physical body
My beloved bestowed upon me to play with
The hut will fall down one day
The swan will fly away
The story of Vimal's life will remain

The impermanent form of the physical body
My beloved bestowed upon me to play with

In 1999

Over Flowing Nectar

Life is overflowing with nectar
Eight cups are offered every day
For the eight phases of the day and night
By the compassionate Creator

Few drink deeply of it,
Whereas others spill it

The world is a gathering of fools
Even then, the Creator does not withhold
But offers the nectar every day,
to the lips of all human beings
Eight cups for the eight phases of the day

Vimal is watching with sorrow in her heart
This pitiable story of mankind
But mankind does not leave his foolishness

In 2000

The Existential Essence

The existential essence of Reality
has inflated Itself to such an extent,
That it appears like a Cosmos
This body has transformed itself
into the grand temple of the Divine.

Creation is permeated by the creative energy
This body is permeated by the same Divinity
Duality has disappeared,
Differences have melted away.

The movement of breath sings the song of death
Birth and death enact the cosmic dance of life.

*

Chapter Six

Contributions in Uplifting Human Consciousness

The Light Radiates

A demonstration
of the potential
of an extensive network of friends,
cooperating informally
in many nations
to organize international tours and
publishing materials in many languages,
free from complex,
authoritative organizations.

Partake Please Of My Call!

Come, come ye, come one and all
And harken please, to my beacon call.

In my heart thy anguish seethes
Only if ye care and lend thy ear
To thee all, will I dare speak of its ending.

Listen, listen with thy mind
Perceive with they intellect
Ponder ye,
And let the all pervading awareness
embrace thee.

Poised and awaiting, am I
At the door of time and space
I beckon one and all
Come quicken thy pace,
and partake please, of my. call.

... *Vimala*

Chapter Six

Contributions in Uplifting Human Consciousness

The Light Radiates

First Trips Outside India

Vimalaji did much work out of India. It started right after Vimalaji completed her Master of Arts degree.

Prophecy of Swami Omkar

In the three months before I went abroad, I was in Dhantoli (Nagpur) with Dada (Dharmadhikri). Every morning we would go for a walk on Jail Road. We were going for a walk one morning, and we saw a Sanyasi coming toward us. As we neared him, he raised his hand. We came closer to him, stopped, and offered Namaskar. He asked Dada: "Is she your daughter?" "Yes." "She will travel around the world. Her features show that. Not once but many times, and much work will be done through her hands." Dada said: "I am a poor Brahmin; how will my daughter go around the world?" Swami said: "Did I say that you would get it done? I only said she would travel all over the world. Within a year you will get an indication of it. Her world travel will begin within a year. My name is Swami Omkar. I live in Nandi Hills near Ooty, when she goes, drop me a post card."

Swami Omkarji spoke only to Dada. He just looked at me once and did not speak with me. It is my nature that when I am with elders I do not talk until I am asked to speak. I am very fond of observing and I am very fond of silence. In life, my destiny requires me to speak, but I love silence more than speech.

Dada asked for Swamiji's blessings. Swami gave a blessing and took from his sling bag, a crystal linga, and said to me: "When you go on your world travels, keep this with you." I replied: "I won't do any worship of it. I don't know how to do it. My father has never been to a temple. I don't know how to do puja and have never done puja." He said: "There is no reason to do puja. As you have your bath everyday, just wash it daily and keep it with you." It stayed with me from 1951 for about fifteen to twenty years. Whenever I would go out of the country, I would take the

Baan with me. After that I gave it to my mother. Mother used to do Puja and I knew she would look after it well.

He was called Nandi Hills Omkar Swami. I never had his darshan again. But when I was selected to represent India at the World Youth Assembly in the United States, Dada announced: "See what the Swamiji said came true." In 1952 I was selected by Hyderabad, Nagpur and Bombay Universities, to represent them at the World Youth Assembly.

Travelling to Europe

Vimalaji worked again on the international level, in 1959 and 1960 she was sent as a delegate of Land Gift Movement to Yugoslavia, Switzerland, Norway and Sweden.

In 1961 Vimalaji went for the first time to listen to Krishnaji's talks in Saanen, Switzerland, at Krishnaji's invitation, and met numerous inquirers from all over the world. She came into close contact with a few, who were touched by her poems and understanding.

As Vimalaji says: "Perhaps contact with J. Krishnamurti and attendance at Krishnamurti Gatherings in Saanen from 1961 to 1968, proved to be the catalyst behind the fantastic phenomenon of invitations from various countries and continents between 1962 and 1992." Vimalaji always went only on invitation and never on her own initiative.

Meeting with the Frankenas

Without anticipation, expectation, hope, it fell upon my shoulders to travel and communicate perceptions and understanding to people abroad. My sharing began with poetry: *"I have drunk deep at the fountain of Life, I am no more thirsty ..."* That was the first poem I shared with the Frankenas. And the travelling began.

The work spread due to the organising capacity and hard work of Mr. Frankena. Mrs. Frankena took care of Vimala and Mr. Frankena took care of organising each visit, contacting people from many countries. He had been the organiser of J. Krishnamurti Youth Camps at Ommen. Yaapbhai joined us in 1962 and Mikaji in 1964. They worked together along with the Frankenas and are witnesses of the work that began in Europe.

Mr. Frankena was a very skilful and very efficient person and so the work spread to Norway, Sweden, France, Italy, and Switzerland.

It is the dynamism of Truth that caused the spread of the work. For thirty years I lived as a wanderer. It was not easy. I lived among the people not travelling first class and staying in fancy hotels.

Though my student life was hard and working with Vinobaji was hard, this international travelling was much, much harder. From 1962 to 1972, I travelled alone, taking care of all my personal work: cooking my meals, washing my clothes, pressing them, correspondence, interviews, camps, lectures, an inhuman amount of exertion of my body and brain. It is only after 1972, when I collapsed in a Birmingham conference, that friends volunteered to accompany me on my foreign travels. My friends are not from affluent classes, but between 1972 and 1980 they took upon themselves to see that I had a companion.

Soon talks presented during visits overseas were published. Family Frankena and their friends established a Book Trust. Unbelievably, they got talks translated into Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Polish, entirely through the initiative of local friends in the respective countries. It was only in Brazil, Argentina and Italy that friends found some publishers to publish them. I remained a vigilant witness to all these happenings.

All this would not have been possible if I had not a group of intimate friends in each country. These noble friends devoted their energies and dedicated their lives to help me meet my multifarious responsibilities.

Finding New Ways Of Working

The publishing of books began in an informal way. Mrs. Frankena had 10,000 guilders. She said: "With my money these books will be published and printed. The work of printing of books began. Mr. and Mrs. Frankena had a small cottage and three of us used to stay there. I gave talks that were recorded and later I transcribed the talks. Mrs. Frankena would type the transcriptions while I was doing the cooking. In the evening when Mr. Frankena returned after work, we would go to buy the paper. Mrs. Frankena and I would go through the proofs as best we could. So the books got published.

My work outside India was an experiment of working together without any organization, based on friendship, based on joint effort and cooperation.

Vinobaji used to say the age of friendship and cooperation is coming. This scientific age is the age of friendship and cooperation. I thought if he is saying so, let us see how social action based on cooperation and collective efforts can take place. Whether it happens or not, collective effort needs to be made for bringing about a change in society, so that one lives in friendship and cooperation.

This was an effort towards working in an organization-free way. The work would be free of the structure of organization. There would be no salaried workers, there would be no office, and there would be no employees. Dada used to say: "Give of your free time and even if you just give of your free time, a revolution can take place." So those who had leisure made use of that time.

This was the way the work was done in twenty-two countries. Cooperation came from middle-class people who had a job or a business. They were able to get the work done. It was not the rich who got the work done. Many millionaires did make offers. I said: "I am not one of those saints who are kept as pets. It is the custom of millionaires to keep saints as pets; I will not become your pet saint." I used to say that; my speech was very undignified: "The work will be done with the cooperation and the contribution of the ordinary middle class people." God has kept my self-respect and the work has taken place based on a stream of love, spontaneous living and collective effort.

In Holland, Mrs. Frankena would work part time for ten months and earn money, so that when Vimal came, we would have some spare money. Madam Elly Roquette, the Director of the French section of International School in Switzerland, used to make Christmas cards and sell them; what money she collected from that, she would save and give to me.

The many friends I had, who supported international visits, were working people. Some would take part-time jobs to have money enough to pay for my travel expenses. When friends sent a ticket for travel, I would take my clothes and go. The friends would look after the expenses for living and eating. I would cook in the home provided. I cooked myself, making rice and dhal or cracked wheat and dhal, and adding vegetables to it. The evening meal was of bread, milk and fruit.

The phase of world wide traveling began without any background or sponsoring of international organizations. Small groups under the name of "Friends of Vimala" were formed spontaneously. Conferences and camps were organized. Discourses and dialogues got organized at various universities in Europe, United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, South America, Australia, New Zealand and Poland in East Europe.

Cold Night in Switzerland

There were many adventures during my travels.

In December 1962, a lady living in Switzerland gave me a ticket from Bombay to Zurich, and in Zurich she arranged for my talks at the Jung Psychological Research Institute. I was staying with her. One day she asked me: "Is it true, that you are not Krishnamurti's disciple?" I replied: "Yes." "You are not his follower?" "No." "I invited you because I thought you were his disciple, you were his successor." "I'm sorry." "Then there is no place for you in this house." It was 24th December and there was a lot of snow outside. I had only two and a half pounds with me. She said: "You shall not be under this roof. I was under the illusion that I was inviting Krishnamurti's successor." "I am sorry." I left. With ten shillings I got a taxi, and it took me to Zurich station. I had railway ticket to Utrecht station. But there was no train that night. The next train was the following day, in the afternoon. I sat on the railway bench outside. On all four sides was snow. I did not have many good warm clothes and kept feeling: "Now I am going to fall unconscious. I sat there for five to six hours, asking God: "Now what do you want to do? What play acting is this?"

Then a lady, Ida Tschantrea, who had heard the two talks in the Jung Institute, appeared. "Miss Thakar what are you doing here? Do you want to die?" "No." "Why are you sitting here, with your suitcase?" "No place to go, no money to go." "Come on, when is your train?" I replied: "Tomorrow" "Come on with me." She ordered a taxi and took me to her home. When she took me in and showed me the place to stay, I reached the bed and fell unconscious. Because of sitting in the snow for six hours my hands and feet turned blue. She made fermentation with warm water, applied brandy and I came back to consciousness. She asked me what happened. I said "I feel ashamed to speak badly about anyone." How could I let her know that my hostess removed me from the house? It would be insulting for the lady. But I had to tell the story. Ida looked after me, and the next day she put me in the train.

Further Contact with Krishnaji

Just as this lady turned Vimalaji out of the house because Vimalaji said she was not the follower of Krishnaji, there were many other misunderstandings that Vimalaji encountered, during her travels. It was Krishnaji who invited Vimalaji for the first time to Saanen and introduced her to his friends there, it was Krishnaji who encouraged Vimalaji to go out and talk, it was Krishnaji who offered to heal the ear and yet it was the Krishnamurti groups spread all over Europe who created much misunderstanding and Vimalaji had to go through many painful incidents.

Vimalaji recalls how the travels began and some incidents that took place. (Greater details of Vimalaji's meetings with J. Krishnamurti and much of what took place have been published in the books "Eternal Voyage" and "Vimalaji's Global Pilgrimage".)

I have described the accident during Bhoodan days, which started a long history of ear illness. In Patna, blood stopped flowing out of my injured ear, but there was no hearing in that ear. There was complete deafness. Friends took me to see specialists in Benares, Lucknow, Calcutta, Pune, Bombay, but nothing improved. In Pune, I saw Dr. Apte, a very well known E.N.T. expert. (Achyutji and Dada both suggested this consultation.) In Bombay, I consulted with Dr. Irani a very big E.N.T. expert, and also Dr. Bharucha.

The doctors kept me under supervision for a couple of months. I had a slight fever, deafness and discharge from the ear. Surgeons decided to operate and the operation took five hours. Bones between the inner ear and the brain had been broken in the accident, and the surgeons removed the bones. They cut muscles from my arm and put them in my ear; even then, the wound would not heal.

Pandit Omkarnath Thakur , somebody I had known from my student days, told Dada: "I am taking her to Almora (in the Himalayas); the climate there is dry. I will keep her in the dry climate and her health will improve. Panditji arranged my stay for one-and-a-half months. We discussed music, and it was a joyous visit, but the ear did not improve.

Incident of Healing with Krishnaji

When Krishnaji heard of the ear injury which would not heal, he called me to Benares and said: "Look Vimalaji, my mother used to say to me that in these hands there are healing powers. I have heard from Raoji that you have great difficulty with your ears, so let us try." I replied: "I never go to saints with complaints about the body."

He said: "When have you come with complaints? I have heard about your ear injury, I have talked with Dadaji, Raoji, and am offering help." I said: "No. Just think if your healing power does work, then today the relation that we have will not be the same. There will be a distance; a distance will be created between us. The relation with saints should be one of spontaneity." Krishnaji replied: "As you wish."

For fifteen days I did not go to the group discussions in case Krishnaji made the offer for a second time, and I would have to refuse him for the second time. I did not want to show any disrespectful behavior to a Maha Purush. Dada would ask me, Rao Sahib would ask me: "Why are you not going?" I'd say: "I don't want to go." I would not explain the inner reason.

Then Baba (Vinobaji) came and Dada asked Vinobaji: "What kind of a girl is this Vimala? Fifteen days ago, Krishnaji offered to help her, and she is said no." Baba asked me: "Vimalanand, what is this?" I said: "One has to live with the destiny of the body. One has to bear it; one does not run away. Why should the energy of Saints be spent on that?"

Baba responded: "It is a very subtle job to catch the net of the ego. Did you ask him?" 'No!' "Did he put the proposal?" "Yes." "Then where did your connection come in, where were you involved in this? People like you studying in colleges; your intellect gets corrupted. Krishnamurti had to say I will put my hand on your ears; for him it is sufficient that in his chitta a sankalpa, an intention has arisen. The work can be done just by that intention. But you require verification. You have an active mind; that is why the innocent man has offered to put his hands on your ear. Go to him. Behind your refusal is your ego." Sometimes Dada would point out the workings of my ego, sometimes Baba. I went the next day. I felt that when the elders who have such clarity of perception make suggestions, I should listen. Then Krishnaji did the healing.

Because Vinobaji spoke to me strongly, I went through the cure; otherwise I would not have done it. Dada, Achyutji, and Rao Sahib knew my feelings; nobody else knew.

In 1961, I received advice: "Go to London. As the ear is not getting well, go for treatment in a hospital in London." J.P. said: "I will make the arrangements for the trip." I said: "J.P. you have been in politics and maybe you will go again into politics and if you call me, I will be obligated to you. How will I be able to refuse you? So let it go. What is the need to go to England?" He did not say anything.

After one month Prabhavatiji came to Benares with a suitcase full of clothes for me to wear in London. In those days, our size in clothes and chappals was nearly the same. (I am big now, but I was not big then.) In 1958, J.P. had been to Europe so she had some clothes appropriate for London. She told me: "Look I had Stree Dhan, (inheritance) the jewelry was with my brother in Calcutta. I went to Calcutta and have sold it all. Out of the money from the sale of the jewelry, you purchase your ticket to London. Now you can have no objection to going." J.P. said: "Now your fear is removed; now you make preparations to go. I have written a letter to Lord David Astor who has agreed to take you to London Guy Hospital and arrange for an ear operation there."

When Krishnamurti heard that I was preparing a trip to London, he told Dada: "In England I will be Vimala's guardian, you don't worry. I feel there will be no need for the operation, but let her go."

By the time I left for England, Krishnamurti had already given me several healing sessions. When doctors in London Guy Hospital completed a check-up, they said: "You don't need an operation." Krishnamurti advised me: "If they speak about an operation don't fix the date. Only if I am present will the operation take place." But when they said there is no need for operation, Krishnamurti said: "Come along to Switzerland, I will make arrangements for your stay in Switzerland. You will recoup there."

Often I have said that others gave me everything; I have not done anything on my own. And even in Europe, it was the same. Krishnaji made all arrangements and, in this way, my visits to Switzerland began.

People came to Switzerland from Holland, Norway, many other countries. In those days I started writing poetry, and shared my poems with some visitors from other countries. They would then request that I read poems to their friends. I agreed.

I have drunk deep at the fountain of Life -
I am no more thirsty.

I have tasted the nectar of Life -
I am no more hungry .

Time has whispered softly, the song of the timeless -
I am no more weary.

Life has unfolded gently the mystery of death.
I am no more scary.

Love has kindled up every corner of the earth –
I am no more lonely."

Like this poem, I wrote many poems. After I shared the poems, people listening would request: "Explain to us the meaning." I used to recite the poems and explain the meaning. That was the beginning of the talks.

Somebody who heard the poems said: "Come to Holland." Another person said: "Come to Norway." They wanted to organize small meetings in which my poems would be the basis for talks and discussions. So the world-wide work began in this way.

Offers from Krishnamurti

Krishnamurti, and along with him Rao Sahib and Achyutji, wanted me to become the editor of Krishnamurti's International Journal. Krishnaji said to me: "Vimalaji, all my friends would love you take up the editorship." I said: "Sir I do not want to belong to the Krishnamurti Circle. I never belonged to the Vinoba Circle though I worked there. I did not become a member of Sarva Seva Sangh nor of any Institution. As much responsibility I can fulfill as a private individual let me do that. I do not want to belong to Krishnamurti circle." "I have no circle around me." I said: "There is a circle in spite of you."

JinrajadasVisits

In 1966, Jinrajadas, called Raja, visited me. He was tall, well-dressed and had an impressive personality.

He said to me: "You should know that my death was not normal. In Mexico someone from my team gave me poison. I said: "Why are you telling me this?" "You are going tomorrow to meet Krishnamurti in Geneva. Tell this to Krishna." I replied: "You tell him." He said: "No, I'm telling you," and left. When this happened I was sleeping. When Blavatsky came I was sleeping but on her coming I got up, maybe because she used to smoke strong tobacco, by her coming I got the smell of strong tobacco and my sleep went and I sat up The incidents that took place, took place with me sitting but during the talk with Jinrajadas I was sleeping.

Does the smell of the tobacco even remain after death? It was there, only that much I can tell you. As much as I can see clearly the past, I am describing to you.

The next day when I went to Geneva and met Krishnaji, I said: "Krishnaji yesterday I met a gentleman who gave his name as Jinrajadas. Krishnaji said: "Raja." I reported what Jinrajadas said: "Tell Krishnaji I was poisoned by one of the members of my team; it was not a natural death." Krishnaji remarked: "That is it. That is it."

I was not curious to ask anything further. Curiosity is not there in my life. I never wish to know about someone who has no relevance to my life. Maybe this is called detachment.

Krishnaji did not say this is a hallucination, a projection. He said: "That's it, that's it," two or three times. Then he was quiet and left.

On An Eternal Voyage

I wrote down the talks I had with Krishnamurti and the experience of the healing energy on the ear. I named the book "Beyond the known." I showed the manuscript to Dada, Achyutji, Rao Sahib, and then Krishnamurti. Dada himself took it to him. The manuscript stayed with Krishnaji for ten or fifteen days. Afterwards when he was returning it to Dada, he asked: "Why the title, 'Beyond the known'?" And then suddenly he stopped, and after a second or two, he said "No, it is her book; let it be, let it be as it is." He made no other comment. Later I sent him a note and asked him to point out any misquotation even of one word. I said in the note: "If anywhere there is any misrepresentation, I will make changes, and if there has been any exaggeration, I will remove it." He said: "Nothing of the sort," and returned the manuscript.

When the manuscript was returned, Rao Sahib and Achyutji asked me: "Vimalaji is it necessary to publish this book?" I said: "Yes, people who look on the healing as a miracle, as magic, will get a chance to view the incident from a scientific viewpoint. Now, they will have a scientific view of the operation of spiritual energies.

Rao Sahib announced: "In printing this book, there is a danger; you are taking a risk." "What danger are you talking about? I have shown the manuscript to Krishnaji, and he could have told me not to print it." Rao Sahib said: "He won't say no, but it is not his wish that this book be printed." I said: "Your saying so doesn't convince me. I wrote Krishnaji a letter. If he had said one word against the book, I wouldn't print it. Did he tell you to inform Vimala not to print it?" "No, he did not say so." "Dada went himself to give the manuscript to Krishnaji and after two weeks to bring it back. If he had brought back the message that it should not be printed, I wouldn't print it. When someone else says not to print the book, I won't stop." "You will regret it," Rao Sahib said. "Ok, that it is all right."

When the book was printed, people of Krishnamurti Foundation of England and Europe were immensely upset. The first issue they raised was: "We have the full rights to Krishnamurti's words, a monopoly. I said: "Monopoly applies to what he says at the public meetings. These are private conversations with me. How can anyone have a monopoly over conversations? I have shown the manuscript to Krishnaji." These people went to Krishnaji: "Had you given your consent to the publication?" "Why should I? It is her book." "Had you asked her not to publish the book?" "Why should I? It is her book."

In 1964, the European Krishnamurti Foundation and the British Krishnamurti Foundation brought a legal case against me at the court in Hague. I did not know that they had done that. An old acquaintance of Krishnamurti since 1920, Mr Busso of Romania, came to meet me in Saanen and said: "Look my child they are going to drag you into international court; you will have to get a lawyer." "I won't take a lawyer, I have no money." He put his hand on my shoulder and said: "You don't worry, I am an old lawyer, and I will fight the case for you." "But why should I fight a case, what have I done?" "You don't know these people of the Foundation; they are millionaires of Europe, of Britain." I said: "I have not lived with these sophisticated people. I don't belong to the elite; I belong to the middle class. I have been with the masses. He may be a man of the classes; I am a person of the masses."

Some people had circulars printed saying that an Indian woman of this name is roaming around in Europe, and admirers of Krishnamurti should not go to her meetings. This had an unexpected effect. (They did me such a wonderful favor.) Many people became curious about the woman described in the circular and decided that they must see her. In the South of France, 300 people came to listen, in Paris 500 people came to listen to my talks. They showed me the circulars and kept coming to attend the meetings.

In Rome, Krishnaji invited me for a meal and I went. I asked: "Krishnaji, why are the people around you so angry about the book I printed, why are they talking about doing a case?" He said: "I have no people around me. Look I am an old man. (He had passed seventy by then.) Tomorrow even I might speak against you. You have to live in spite of Krishnamurti. Go ahead and live your life. Don't bother about who says what."

Yehudi Menuhin used to attend Krishnamurti's talks. He asked me: "Do you understand Krishnamurti?" I said: "Yes, what he says is simple to understand." When Krishnamurti was told what I said, he remarked: "Thank heavens there is at least one person who says that she understands."

Yehudi Menuhin and his sister came to the school where I was giving talks. A nice literary group attended as well, including Carlos Suares who had been a friend of Krishnaji's since 1920.

Carlos Suares asked Krishnaji: "What is this commotion? Why are your Foundation members troubling this girl? What has she done? What has she written? Why don't you stop them?" Krishnamurti said: "You go and stop them."

So Yehudi Menuhin, Carlos Suares, Mr. and Mrs. Fouere stopped the talk about a legal case against me.
Mr Busso was very happy when the case did not go to court, and the idea of filing a case in court was abandoned.

Krishnamurti Groups Allegations

In 1970 I was giving talks in Hawaii. The day after I arrived, the secretary of Krishnamurti Study Group came to meet me, and asked me to listen to a cassette of a talk Krishnaji gave to secretaries of various Krishnamurti groups. On the cassette, Krishnaji said there are two Indians going around the world claiming to be his successors: one is U.G. Krishnamurti and the other is Vimala Thakar." And then he said: "I want you to understand very clearly that I have no successor."

When after eight months I returned to India, news of Krishnaji's message on the cassette had reached Dada who announced: "This is wrong! You come with me while I tell Krishnamurti that you are doing an injustice to this girl." I said: "I am not worried. Whether it is justice or injustice doesn't matter."

Dada said to me: "Look Vimal, you are young, and you are giving your life for important work. You come with me this once." I said: "There is no use. What will you ask him? Will you ask him why did he say this? To put a person on defensive is not right. You go on your own."

Dada would not listen. He took me with him to meet Krishnamurti. When Krishnaji came into the room, he did namaskar to Dada, but not to me. He sat near Dada; I sat far away. Dada said: "Krishnaji I think you have been provided wrong information; Vimal has never claimed to be your successor." Dada had hardly spoken these words when Krishnamurti got up and said: "Sir, have you any other thing to discuss with me?" Dada replied: "No." Krishnaji said: "Namaste," and then left.

The interview was only for a couple of minutes. Krishnaji did not even look at me. Usually he waited for Dada to leave, but on this occasion, he did not show that respect. Dada was very pained and shocked. He said: "He is doing a wrong thing." I said: "What did you get by going, by asking?" "I did not know he would behave like this." When Dada told Achyutji, he was also pained.

I have said about Krishnamurti: "I know the teacher and the teachings, but I never knew the man." And this is a fact. I can even say this about Vinobaji. I knew Bhrahmashri Vinoba but Vinoba the person, I do not know.

Travel to Many Continents

Invitation to California

In 1968 in Saanen, Switzerland, I was drinking coffee in a small coffee house when a young French man teaching at Stanford University, California came with his friend to talk to me. They said: "Why don't you come to California?" I said: "Oh, is going to California just like a few hours drive from Saanen to Paris? Where will I get the money for the ticket? It costs thousands of dollars. I do not have an organisation. I don't have the money. When I come to Europe, I come with a suitcase of clothes and return with that suitcase." The young men became thoughtful: where were they to get the money? We were talking like this, and at the next table an elderly gentleman was sitting. He got up, moved his chair closer, and sat down. He said: "We will talk about the financial aspect later. Can you go to California?" I said: "Yes, if I came to Europe, why not America? What is the difficulty?" "Will you go?" "Yes." "I will make the arrangement for the ticket." His name was Mr. Middleman. He was from Holland, from one of the wealthy families of Holland.

He said: "I have listened to you, young lady; your word must reach America." "My work in Europe finishes in October; I will go then."

Who was that young person I met in Saanen? What was his family background? Where will he arrange for me to stay? I did not ask anything. Jagat, Prabha's younger brother was living in USA. I wrote a letter to Jagat who assisted me when I reached California in 1968. I stayed with Jagat and did my work. I gave talks at University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University, and Santa Barbara University. The French boy who was a French Professor made very good arrangements. He must have been 30-32 years old. This is how the entrance into America began.

So my acquaintance with California began, and continued until we wound up the work in 1983. Prabha was with me in 1972, 1979 and 1983; Kishanbhai in 1974, Kalyanbhai and Bhabhi in 1976.

In 1972 Prabhaben went with me to the USA, I asked her to write down in Gujarati a talk she had heard in English. She said: "I have never written. What if I cannot do it?" "We will see then." I was surprised how well she was able to write. It was in her blood. Her father was a very good writer; he used to write for Times of India newspaper. So Prabha would hear a talk in English, come home, do the cooking and all the other work, and at night would write down the talk in Gujarati. In this way, publishing of books in Gujarati began.

The friends in America took me to nearly forty states, often there were talks at universities. I would speak on topics such as: "Frontiers of Mind", "Mutation of Mind", "Mystery of Silence", "Intellect and Intelligence", "Self discovery", "Dimensions of Consciousness", "Dimensional Transformation in the quality of Consciousness", and "Meditation".

Yatras in Australia

During the Bhoodan Andolan I met a member of the Friends Quaker Society, Donald Groom. He had worked in Bhoodan Andolan. He lived for twenty-five years in Rasuliya Ashram in Madhya Pradesh and ran the Friends Quaker Society there. With great love he walked with a group of us for three months in Jabalpur Zilla (district), Hoshangabad Zilla, and Sagar Zilla. We did padyatra (march on foot) together.

Donald had a great love for India, but his children decided to migrate to Australia. In 1970, Donald and Erica along with their sons went to Australia. When he called me to Australia in 1971, I went and travelled throughout the whole of Australia. His daughter was living in the Isles of Tasmania. I was also invited there to give talks.

Wherever anyone invited me to give talks, I would go. My life was one of giving full response. It was a fulfilled spiritual life. I took no initiative, as I had no desires to fulfil. I do not know if any wish is lying in the unconscious, but in the conscious mind there is no wish.

The Yatra was very nice in Australia. The International Friends Society appreciated the Yatra. They invited me to return in 1972 and I agreed.

On 6th March 1972, it was Donald's sixtieth birthday. Donald, his wife Erica and I were drinking tea in the morning, when Donald said: "Vimala my one wish is that my death takes place in Bharat." (Donald and his wife spoke to me in Hindi.) I commented: "On your birthday Donaldbhaya, why are you thinking of death?" He answered: "The wish is there. Why don't you ask why it is there?" I said: "Ok, why?" He said: "My children do not have love for Bharat, but if I die there, they will surely go to Bharat." I announced: "Look, you cannot talk like this on your birthday."

My Yatra was completed and Donald sat with me and worked out a plan for my 1973 Yatra. I returned to India. In August, Donald came to India. He was flying to Bhopal, the plane crashed, and Donald died in the accident.

In 1973 again came Erica's letter explaining it was Donald's last wish that I complete the Yatra he planned.

Erica wrote: "I will not be able to make as good arrangements for your trip as Donald did, but you will have to come." So I went for the third time to Australia.

After that I have been a few more times, but if it had not been for the friendship with Donald and Erica, I would not have gone to Australia. That is how my trips to Australia and New Zealand began.

Call to Canada

After entering into America, people called me to Canada. I went to Canada in 1976. There in the Toronto Camp an Indian lady, Kaiser, attended the talks. The Toronto Camp lasted for ten days; on the seventh day Kaiser said: "I will join you." "Who are you? From where are you?" She replied: "You are coming to Ottawa and you will be staying with me. This is it, this is what I want, and I am coming with you." I said: "How can you come, leaving home and everything?" She answered: "It has left. One did not have to leave it; it has left." She joined me in 1978, and until today she works with me. Kaiser joined the group of friends around me, and has devoted all her time and energy to the work. She accompanied me from 1980 to 1992, to practically every place in India and abroad. She is from a wealthy family, but lives in poverty, in difficult circumstances to perform the work she agreed to do. She is deserving of our Namaskar.

Poland

I received an invitation to visit Poland, in 1987, to give talks in Warsaw University in the Indianology Department. They asked me to speak on the subject of "Dimensional transformation in Human Consciousness"

In 1989, when the first non-communist government came into power in Poland, I was there for a ten day camp. History was being made in Poland while I was staying there. During that camp friends from Uzbekistan and Georgia also met me and so relations were not limited to Poland, but extends to Uzbekistan and Georgia.

Chile

The invitation to visit Chile came from Edgardo Thumala, who was a student of Krishnamurti's teachings and a catholic. I have a friend in California, Barbara Pennington, who is an educational psychologist. I said: "You come along with me. How can I go alone?" So I took Kaiser and Barbara along with me and went to Chile, a country I did not know anything about. It was jumping into the unknown. That was perhaps the remaining karma of my life

In 1983, Chile was under military dictatorship and so was Argentina. Peron was a devilish dictator of Argentina, and Pinochet in Chile.

Edgardo Thumala and his friends made very good arrangements at a Catholic Retreat Center near Santiago City where nuns stayed. The camp was organised in a very nice way. There were even two or three talks in Santiago University. A socialist leader, Mr Luccho, came to the talks, bringing his friends with him. University intelligentsia also came.

A Roman Catholic priest, who was a very fond of the books by Krishnamurti and Vimala, attended the talks. He had started a non-violent resistance movement in Chile. On the last day of the camp, he had a word with me: "Miss Thakar, you will not forget Chile. Chile needs you." I listened quietly and did not respond.

The resistance movement lead a very big procession that day in Santiago, and in front of the President Pinochet's office, the Catholic father burnt himself alive. He did self-immolation. Now I was bound by his words: "Chile needs you; do not forget Chile." Before going to the procession the father had written a small note and sent it to me: "When Chile gets democracy, then you can say your reason for coming to Chile comes to an end."

There was a great uproar in the city because of father's self-immolation. He was a person of depth and understanding. If there was any force, any shakti, to free Chile from military dictatorship, it was the Roman Catholic church. They started the non-violent movement. I returned to Chile in 1986, then when the country got Azadi - freedom. I received a letter from them: "You had said you will come back when Chile has democracy. You will come to celebrate democracy. Now democracy has come. Now you come and be with us. So I went.

Vimalaji recalls another incident in Chile

In 1985 in Chile I was invited by the U.N. Peace Committee to give a speech, so I was ready to go and they asked me: "Won't you change your clothes to give the talk? Delegates will be present from about 40 nations." What is the connection with the clothes and the talk? I have to give a speech. To go all dressed up and put on make up etc If it is U.N. it may be U.N. so what? I went the way I was dressed and gave my talk and came back.

The secretary there said to me, even today I remember it, she said "You are unbelievable simple" and I said: "If you want you can even call me simpleton. If you literature

This has happened to me. I had to go to Buckingham palace in 1952 so I went the way I was, not like Gandhi who had said "I am a representative of a nation which has to remain half naked" (because of the economic constraints) and I had not thought of that. But arrogance and pretension never came in my life. I am the way I am, and that way I will express myself and live the life. Nothing to hide and nothing to show off. Now I know this is called spontaneity. Sahaj Yoga – the Yoga of spontaneity. Then I never knew that.

Argentina

I visited Argentina for the first time in 1985. During that visit we had a camp in Santa Marcos, and there were eight hundred people in the camp. They came from about ten countries: Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Colombia, and Uruguay. It was a very good camp.

In Argentina I learnt about Rudolf Alphonsin, a socialist leader, who during the dictatorship in Argentina, was put in military jail for ten years. While he was in jail, he read the literature of Mahatma Gandhi and Krishnamurti. He was very fond of them. When he was released from jail, someone put in his hands book by Vimalaji. He organised a state level meeting of his educational advisors to discover what should be the new education system. He organised similar seminars in all the provinces in Argentina.

When Rudolf Alphonsin became the President of Argentina, he had made an announcement. I was there when he made the announcement. What did he announce? "Peace will be my domestic policy. Peace will be my foreign policy. On this I am taking a referendum." This was within two months of becoming the President. He continued: "If this is acceptable to the state then I will continue being the President. Otherwise I do not want to be the President." He got the resolution passed by 72% of the Lower House and 49-50% in the Upper House.

With Chile there was a twenty-year fight for freedom, and in Argentina, Alphonsin made a Peace Treaty, a Friendship Treaty. The military there did not like the treaty and the industrialists did not like it either. When Peace became the domestic policy and the foreign policy, people became disturbed. In the five years he was President, there were three attempts to kill him.

So after my first visit in 1985, friends in Argentina requested me to visit again. I returned to Argentina in 1986, and friends said: "Vimalaji we want to do restructuring education work here, please could you guide us." So they made a committee and prepared a questionnaire.

I made only two trips to Argentina, after that I could not go there.

There is a very big Friends of Vimala Group in Brazil and the group invited me for a visit, but I could not go. Peru has a similar group and invited me to visit but I was not able to go there either.

Ireland

When I was in Australia, Donald Groom said: "My wish is to die in Bharat." He had also expressed another wish. He had said: "Vimala, if you get to visit Ireland, it will be nice. My wife's father was in Ireland." I kept quiet.

Where is 1972 and where is 1991? When I received the invitation to visit Ireland in 1991, I said "It was Donald's wish I should go to Ireland."

I had not seen the face of the person who invited me, I did not know this person. I said it was a friend's last wish, and as I am a person, who lives on love, let us go. For that reason I went to Ireland when the invitation came, and stayed for five days.

Mysterious Events While Travelling

Unexpected Gifts

During Vimalaji's travels she was gifted many mementos of great beings, quite unexpectedly. Vimalaji describes an incident in California.

Madam Blavatsky's granddaughter was living in California. After hearing three of my talks, she came to me, and removed her ring. Set in the ring was sapphire or some other precious stone. Blavatsky's picture was carved in the stone. The ring had been commissioned by the

Maharaja of Kashmir, Raja Gulab Singh, and he had given it as a gift to Madam Blavatsky. Her grand daughter gave me the ring saying: "Here you keep it, you deserve this."

I had an encounter once with Madam Blavatsky. She came to me and said: "I would like to tell you a part of my life that has not been described in my biographies: how I went to Greece and what experiences I had in Greece. She told me: "There is one place in Greece where women are not allowed to enter, so I wore male clothes and entered in disguise. I learnt secrets there that are taught about mystical life. I asked: "Is there any reason for you to tell me this?"

She took me to the Corsican Mountains (between Georgia and Uzbekistan) and showed me where she stayed in the Corsican Mountains. She also told me the story of staying in Khandala ghat and learning Gyaneshwari from Gulab Singh Maharaja. She wrote about Gyaneshwari in "Voice of Silence" (her small book, the "Voice of Silence" is for the Esoteric Circle of students) and asserted that there is no book like Gyaneshwari; it is useful for sadhakas, for inquirers.

I do not know the reason for showing me all this but she showed it to me.

Madam Blavatsky's broach came to me in England. It was made from real diamonds. I said: "I do not want to keep diamonds." I gave the ring to my host in London, Mary Brooks, and the gold ring with the carving of Madam Blavatsky I gave it to Mrs. Thakar, Aka Sahib (Vimalaji's mother). I said: "You keep it."

Things that had belonged to Blavatsky or had a connection to her life, came to me. I did not keep any of them, but they did surely come to me.

Several Events in Norway

On one trip to Norway, Einar Beer gave me special items that belonged to his Guru, Swami Amogacharya, who was the nephew of Swami Vivekananda. In 1915 Swami Amogacharya was invited to give talks in Oslo University, Stockholm. After the talks, some of his supporters requested that he remain in Norway. He stayed in the mountains of Norway, called the mountain Brahmakul, and established a Brahma Vidya Ashram.

Swami Amoganand Acharya translated the Upanishads into Norwegian language. It was his contention that Vedas were written in Norway, in the northern parts. He made a list of the numerous Sanskrit words in the Norwegian language and published a book, "A comparative study of Sanskrit and Norwegian language." He was a very great scholar. He died in 1945

So After hearing my talk in Oslo, Einar Beer took me to Brahmakul and gave me the asana on which Amoganand Acharya used to sit. It is made of velvet and has a border of real gold threads. When he gave me the asana, he asked me: "Do not give it to anyone, my Guruji used to sit on it. You put it to use. I continue to use the asana in Mount Abu.

He gave me a ring of seven metals that I gave to Kalyanbhai to wear; today it is still on his hand. What would I do with ring? They say it is very lucky and Swamiji used to wear it, so you wear it.

Food Poisoning in Norway

When Vimalaji was ill with food poisoning in the hospital in Norway a gentleman with Indian features came to her bed and put his hands over her head, assuring her that the time for departure was not yet come. Vimalaji did not know then, who the person was, but the next day her boils were healed and she was discharged from the hospital. Later, on returning to India, Vimalaji discovered who the person was. Vimalaji gives a vivid description of it.

I did not know the person who came to the hospital room in Norway when I was ill from food poisoning. I thought that when I returned to India, I would ask Bapuji, Gopinath Kaviraj about the incident in Norway.

When I returned to India, I met with Gopinath Kaviraj at the headquarters of Sarva Seva Sangh in Varanasi. He called others to join us.

One person he called was Premlatta, a student of the musician Omkarnath Thakur. (Omkarnalth Thakur was a musician, who had done such deep Sadhana of OM that just by intoning the word the musical instrument kept on the floor would begin resonating on its own, without touch of human hand.) He said to Premlatta: "Go to Sarva Seva Sangh, Rajghat, *Snehamai (mother of love)* has come.

Her name is Vimaldevi bring her here, there is some work with her."

Another person he called was Mr. Lahiri, the head of the chemistry department of Benares Hindu University. He told Mr. Lahiriji where he wanted him to take me.

When I met with Kaviraj. He said: "Come Snehamai come, come." He gave me a lot of blessings. He did put a tilak on my forehead and gave me a Jabbakusum flower. I asked: "Babuji, why did you take all this trouble?" He replied: "The one who took trouble was someone else, not me."

I was thinking that I should share the Norway incident with Babuji and ask him who the person could be. This was on my mind, but I was not thinking of speaking about it then, for that I wanted to go to meet him again.

In the meantime, Mr. Lahiriji arrived. Bapuji said to Premlatta and Lahiriji: "You take her and go, go now." We went through numerous lanes and by-lanes to an old house. They took me up to the first floor. There I was surprised to see a large picture of a saint, one big square wooden asana, one big copper water pot, kamandal, big wooden sandals and a walking stick. I said to Prembhen: "This is the person who came to Oslo hospital and who saved me. Who is he?" Mr. Lahiri said: "His name is Lahiri Mahashai. He is my great, great grandfather. You must have read Yogananda's autobiography?" I said: "No, I have not read it" "Babuji asked me to bring you here, to have his darshan and to briefly tell you his life story." So I heard the story of Lahiri Mahashai, Yukteshwarji, Yoganandji. We went back to Babuji and I did pranaam to him. He said: "Did you recognize who had taken the trouble? That was Lahiri Mahashai." He presented me with an English copy of Yoganandji's autobiography as a gift. "You are very lucky." This is what he said to me.

I stayed with Premlatta for three or four days and read all about Yogananda and Lahiri Mahashai. I wondered how these Mahashais know where I am? When I am staying abroad, how do they keep track of me? How do they know? Is it that these man-made national boundaries make no difference to them, to their consciousness? Even today I don't know.

Saying Goodbye to a Freedom Fighter and Saint

Between 1962 and 1976 Vimalaji visited Norway eight times, during her 1968 trip to Norway she was called back to India to say goodbye to a great being of India, whom Gandhiji called the National Saint, and whom Vimalaji knew since childhood, as we have seen an earlier chapter.

Tukroji Maharaj developed cancer in 1968 and was taken to Bombay Hospital. He said he knew when he was going to die, how he would die and where he would die.

When he went to Pandarpur, he composed his last bajaan. *Pandarpurcha Panduranga bhegee* ... and sang it: He sang his last bhajans, and announced: "This illness is not going to go. I will leave this body in the care of the doctors; if they make any new discoveries, it can be helpful to others." He made arrangements for everything after his death including who would look after the Ashram. He designated Balasaheb Desai to do that.

When he came to Bombay the governor, Mr. Cherian, asked Maharaj:"Do you have any last wishes?" And Maharaj said: "Yes I have one offspring, Vimala. I don't know where she is, but I would like to meet her." So friends searched for me. I was in Norway. Vasubhai Parikh phoned me in Norway and said Maharaj is thinking of you, please come. They sent me a ticket to return to India. When I reached Bombay airport and went through customs, a tall man came up to me and asked: "Are you Vimal Devi? Have you come to meet Tukroji Maharaj?" "Yes." "I have some important work for you."

He followed Vasubhai and me home, and said: "For nine days I have had instructions, Ardash of Amba Mata, that I should give money to you. Since the last three days, when I am doing puja, I receive instructions, that I should give you an exact amount on money. He gave me Rs. 9,600.00.

I asked Vasubhai: "You have sent the ticket, how much did you spend on it?" "Rs.9,600.00." "Count the money." And it was the exact sum.

I went to Mojaree (the place where Maharaja's Ashram was and where he was staying then) the same night. When I went to Maharaj, he asked me: "Did you meet the gentleman, are all arrangements looked after?"

That man had referred to Amba Mata's instructions and Maharaj asks: "Did you get the money?" It was so surprising, so mind-boggling!

Maharaj said I want to do your puja for the last time. He washed my hands in a large thali and also the feet and did arti three times.

He used to say: "The vasna of things touches our consciousness but in that moment we are aware of it, however this vibhuti, this being, is such, that her chitta is not touched by kama vikara." Dada also had a discussion on this subject with a number of pandits.

He made me write a Bhajan then: " Tu he Shehan Shah Duniya ka shenshah." I stayed with him for three days and then returned to Europe. I have published some of my letters with him as I have also published letters to and from Dada. I have also letters of Omkar Nath Thakur, Pandit Ramnandan Mishra, Jai Prakashji, and Prabhavati.

Very Special Darshan in Japan

Fuji Guruji, one of Mahatma Gandhi's leading disciples in Japan, called me to a conference in Japan on the topic: "Dimensions of World Peace." I stayed in the Ashram of Fuji Guruji. One day I was feeling tired from the talks and meetings during the day and decided to sit near the ocean.

I was sitting alone and reciting Ishavasya Upanishad mantras. From far away across the ocean, I could see Gyaneshwar approaching, though he was still quite a distance away. His form was that of a youth not more than eighteen or twenty. But it was Gyaneshwar Maharaj as I had seen him in pictures from childhood. He was very like the portraits. I do not know if the pictures are correct or not, but as he is a historical figure who lived about 600 to 700 years ago, we can consider the pictures as accurate. I have seen pictures in Nivasee where Gyaneshwar did his writing, in Paithan, in Eknath Maharaj's room in Pandarpur. I have seen them in a number of places since childhood.

He came towards me step by step. As he moved forward, a composition singing his praise, in Sanskrit came out of my mouth on its own.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is the son of the goddess of learning and celebrated poet.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who has mastered all the sentiments.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is endowed with devotion and knowledge
and is the master of Yoga.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is the fish sailing in the ocean of the nine sentiments

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is full of desire for supreme Truth and immortality.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who lives in spontaneous Samadhi.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is the best amongst the learned men of the world.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is the founder of the five principles of human life.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is the most distinguished devotee of God.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Whose speech is the most beautiful
and is purified by the supreme Truth.
Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Whose life is devoid of passion and full of delight.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is an illustrious man full of modesty and gentleness.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is endowed with spotless beauty.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Whose smile is soft, sweet and gentle.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is endowed with sixteen arts.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is the cool and pleasant sun.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is placid and loved by Shiva and Shakti.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is eagerly desirous of destroying the self.
Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who has the fragrance of budded gem of pure Intelligence.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Whose pure Intelligence is glittering like a blossomed flower.

Salutation to Gyaneshwarai
Who is the lord of love and the son of Nivruti.

Ataami, Japan
December, 1968
(Translated from Sanskrit)

Later, I wrote down the salutation, but I continued sitting there and watching as he came closer, walking on the ocean. When he came absolutely close and our eyes met, the body vanished and from it a light emerged and entered my body through the brow centre. Just as when the body dies a light emerges from it, in the same way the light came out and entered my body.

This event which took place in full consciousness still has its impression on my consciousness.

I returned to my room and wrote down the *Prashashti*. I wrote it down as it came to me. Copies of the salutation are in the editions of Gyaneshwari books published by Vimal Prakashan Trust.

One could say that because there was so much closeness with Gyaneshwar, it is possible that materialisation of my own sub conscious mind occurred. I can believe that what is in the consciousness can arise from the sub-conscious mind, but when events take place, I do not go too deeply into scientific analysis.

He was just as clear as a human being in a physical body - that much I can say. If one thinks about the Divine, one can receive divine energy.

It was not a hallucination or an illusion. If it was a projection of my subconscious mind or thought materialisation – that is what the scientists say today - then it could be because of the intensity of my love for Gyaneshwar. While I was reciting Ishavasya Upanishad, he came. It could be because of the love I have for Gyaneshwar - which perhaps I do not have for anyone else in a human body. You could call it the ultimate in friendship.

Integrating East and West

Vimalaji participated in a Seminar on Science and Spirituality, organized in Santiago, Chile in 1986. Vimalaji spoke about a new perspective of life based on the synthesis of science and spirituality.

The following excerpt from Vimalaji's presentation gives a sample of her ability to integrate eastern and western approaches in her presentations abroad.

I think spiritual inquiry has neglected the realm of the physical, the sensual, the material world, whether it was spiritualists in India or China or among the Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists. They called it an illusion. Shankara was the first propounder of the philosophy of Vedanta and he used the word '*maya*' to describe it. Vedanta means the ending of knowledge and the beginning of direct perception, beginning of a spontaneous, all pervading awareness. Shankara, the young man used the word *maya*, to describe the relative which is translated in English language as illusion. It is not an illusion, in the sense that it is something false. He talked about a hierarchy of realities; he defines how every hierarchy is a relative reality, and how the absolute Reality is beyond the reach of the senses. It is beyond the reach of the mind, the brain, the thoughts and words.

That is what Shankara means by "the ending of knowledge," and unless the authority of knowledge ends in your mind there will not be the sensitivity to perceive that which is beyond the reach of words and the reach of thought.

I think the ending of knowledge is a necessity, a kind of necessary equipment for the direct perception of the Absolute. I am using the term "perception" because in Sanskrit language the feel of a thing is perception. They say you perceive through the ears, you see through the skin. We do not have different verbs in Sanskrit language for hearing and seeing, they are not different activities;

they are the movement of the same sensitivity, so they call it perception through the eyes, perception through the ears.

Spirituality gives you a science which is a direction for search, examination, exploration and experimentation. It has no method, because Truth is a pathless land, there cannot be techniques. Truth cannot be systematized; you can systematize things. But when you have to allow the mind with all its conditionings to go into voluntary abeyance, how can there be any system? In silence how can there be any system. In that emptiness which is full of creative energies that are unknown, how are you going to control them? Are you going to dictate terms to the Divine that it should reveal itself unto you at a certain time by a certain method and only with a certain measure of intensity which your nerves can stand? I think there comes a time when the realm of al effort comes to an end and there is that realm of effortlessness or relaxation

I think there is much scope for a dialogue between genuine science students and genuine spiritual inquirers.

Generally in the minds of people there is a misunderstanding about the roles of science and spirituality. May be not in the minds of the experts on both sides,, but generally even at the end of the twentieth century people have very wrong notions. When somebody talks about science, those who are inclined towards spirituality look upon all these fields of activities as materialistic – as if matter is not of any importance to their daily living or their relationships. On the other hand the word spiritual is not very pleasant to the ears of many scientists. They feel that spirituality is something to do with credulity, with belief with some ethereal mystical things that are not very rational. But science and spirituality are supplementary and complimentary to each other.

The second point is to bring to the notice of the common people, that the motivation behind all the physical sciences and spirituality is the same. For instance there is curiosity to find out what the nature of the planet is, there is curiosity to find out what life and death is. I think there are common motives behind the scientific pursuits and the pursuits of spirituality.

The third point was to remind ourselves, that in spiritual inquiry we are trying to find out if there is anything like God, like Divinity. We are trying to find out what this mysterious inter-relatedness is on the cosmic level. If we have really to find it out, we shall have to adopt the scientific approach of a non-authoritarian, skeptical and tentative attitude towards our findings. That is something that the spiritual inquirers could learn from the students of science.

What could the students of science learn from the spiritual realm? Perhaps the awareness, that Life is a mystery, that it is an "Isness," that it is unindividuated, unparticularised, that it is the emptiness of space out of which, form emerges, out of which the movement of energy emerges, and into which all the movement of energies, all forms, after growing, blossoming and decaying go back. In the pursuit of natural science, there has to be this awareness of the mystery of the ground of existence, which we call nothingness or formlessness.

While the scientists are busy and engrossed with analysis of the part and in search of the beginning of the process of individuation, which has developed out of this huge nothingness of unindividuated creative energy, let him be aware of the totality. Then the grip on the part, the process of individuation, the analysis of energies, the tapping of energies for utilizing them in the service of mankind, will not make them oblivious of the cosmic mystery of which they are a part.

Science gives us the particularization, which is necessary for communication and dealing effectively with the world. We may generalize after the analysis, after finding out the inter relationship and inter action of the particulars, but if that process is severed from or snatched away from the awareness of the totality, which is the perfume of spirituality, which is the essence of spirituality then there becomes a dichotomy.

The part seen out of context of the total or in isolation from the total can become quite a problem for us. And I think that in the pursuit of science we forgot this, we lost the elegance of that basic awareness of the Absolute. So there also they can meet and have a dialogue.

Now let us look at the relationship of the absolute to the relative. The absolute is what I call the sacred, the absolute ground of existence or the Divinity. The relative is the relative things, the objects that have come into the focus of space and time. They have their own value, they have their own utility, though they are the manifestation of the other, they have their own independence, i.e. relative independence from the Absolute.

The question arises whether a spiritualist on one hand and a physicist on the other hand can come together to cooperate with one another.

As the scientist needs the laboratory and the purification of all the instruments he is going to use, the spiritual inquirer has to purify his physical and verbal system, his psychological structure and wash out all impurities.

The purification of instruments, the integrity of motivation, the openness and receptivity for the truth you are going to find out, requires the courage and fearlessness to proceed towards the unknown, and leave the areas of the known behind. These are common requirements for both -- for the pursuit of science and for the pursuit of what we call spiritual inquiry.

Beyond Physics and Metaphysics

Vimalaji explored similar themes on beyond physics and metaphysics

The human race is heavily conditioned by the concept of time and space. In reality the science of physics needed to construct some handy tools, in order to relate to life existing around them. Metaphysics constructed the concept of 'I' and 'Thou', in order to relate to fellow human beings, as well as non human beings. Unfortunately these very useful concepts developed into the content of human bondage. They became an overpowering authority, inhibiting the freedom of consciousness. The very idea of bondage led to the philosophy of enlightenment and total liberation from all kinds of relationships. Innumerable practices, methodologies and techniques were created by the human race, for 'Acquiring Freedom and obtaining Union with Divinity'.

These practices and rituals gained so much importance and priority in the minds of the people, that Life and Living lost all meaning, relevance and sanctity.

The challenge before the 21st Century is to demolish these modern superstitions and verbalize a new perspective of Global as well as Cosmic Life. Life is for Living. The act of Living is the means of Liberation; if at all the word liberation has to be used. All relationships are golden opportunities for self observation and transcending the habit of the self to generate attachment and detachment, while moving through the fantastic phenomenon of relationships.

When one moves through relationships in the utter simplicity and spontaneity, the concept of space and time disappears. It enables a person to live timelessly, without leaving a residue as memory, at any given moment. The old memory or the human past becomes defunct and no new memory is created.

Drenched in the sense of timelessness, a person can remain physically ever fresh and psychologically ever alert and attentive.

These are the words of a person who has enjoyed the existential essence of timelessness, for the last three decades and more. It is possible to state categorically that the idea of Bondage and Liberation are poetic fictions and not scientifically verified facts of life.

May the human race rejoice in the Divinity of Manifest and Unmanifest Life. May it enjoy life and living in a dignified, humane way.

Global Perspective

Vimalaji describes her travels overseas in a style she often uses. In this style she talks about Vimalaji as if she were talking about someone else.

So Vimalaji demonstrated through her travels, what she had said, that: "The whole planet has become a global village. Lives of all human beings are inter-connected by the globalisation of politcs and economics, electronic means of communications, interaction, and transport.

In this cultural context generated by the advance of science and technology, the human race cannot afford to be divided in the name of religion and spiritual idiosyncrasies. The human race has to grow into one global religion – one global interpretation of Ultimate reality, and that religion would be commitment to Truth. Commitment to the truth that you perceive, and you understand.

Learning to live and living means perceiving the Truth yourself, and translating it through every breath, every work, and every deed. If there is an urge to be religious, if there is a concern for the quality of your act of living, the quality of consciousness behind your acts, then even a commoner like your friend Vimala grows into what you call a celebrity today. If you do not resist the Truth that you have understood, there is no bondage. Please do see, there is no other bondage but your own resistance to the truth that you have perceived. You begin calculating, you want to adjust there, adapt there, compromise here, succumb there. It is emotional resistance to the Truth that you perceive and understand that creates obstruction in the path of transformation. One says this with a great sense of responsibility.

Dimensional transformation of human consciousness is the consummation of the human growth and the birthright of every human being. It is not the privilege of the few. Your friend Vimala was never among the few. So let us not deceive ourselves and feel that we understand the truth but can not live it. We don't want to pay the price for living it. We pay the price for buying things, building houses, earning a livelihood but when it comes to paying the price for living the truth that you understand, than our calculations begin. We fear the dynamism of truth. We fear that the truth if lived would upset the style of living, the standard of living. If there is an obstruction or bondage in the path of liberation, it is within us and not outside of us. The consummation of human growth into the transformation of our consciousness is our birthright. It is not for some exceptional person with exceptional upbringing.

There are meditation groups all over the world. So it is our responsibility to see and to conduct ourselves, express our friendship, our respect, in such a way that we do not create any difficulty, in the path of emergence of one religion, and one culture for the whole human race. The truth of physics is not Hindu truths or Muslim truths, whether Einstein or David Bohm verbalises them, it is one truth - the global truth.

Why should not the truth of physics of consciousness be the same? That is the question I am going to leave for posterity. That is the challenge. So let us begin to face the challenges ourselves.

Since the ancient days, those who have taken the trouble of converting their lives into laboratories, searching the physics of consciousness, have discovered that Life is one. The oneness implies relatedness. Inter-relatedness implies inter-actions of energies. So the human race has to discover the validity of this ancient proclamation by wise people, (individually and collectively), in every corner of the globe, from practically every race and every continent"

Vimalaji has surely contributed to discovering the validity of the ancient proclamation that Life is One and has shown it to be so through all her service to humanity and pilgrimage across the globe. Vimalaji travelled through 22 countries of the world for 28 years, speaking about total transformation and mutation of mind, ploughing the field of human consciousness, sewing seeds for the birth of a new, all encompassing, compassionate human consciousness, inviting and encouraging all inquirers to see life in a different perspective, broadening the awareness to include the whole and at the same time being attentive to the particular – placing before them a vision of scientific spirituality. They were days and years of hard work and travels, giving of one's life blood, out of love and compassion. We have a glimpse of what it may have been like from a poem Vimalaji wrote.

The Solitary Traveller

The soundless solitude of Atman
Is impenetrable, imperturbable, immovable.

In the thick of relationships, amongst the multitude
There is the indivisible solitude of Samadhi.

The solitary traveller of such solitude
Has no path, no direction, no goal.

The journey through Life of
such a solitary traveller
Is soundless, timeless, mysterious.

Being solitary
Is utterly different from being lonely.

A lonely person,
pines for the company of another
In aloneness –
There is the glory of fulfilment of Life

In loneliness
there is the burning fire of waiting.
In aloneness
there is fulfilment aflame.
In loneliness
The frightening ghost of emptiness.
In aloneness
There is the sweet music of silence resounding.

That is why
My friends cannot fathom

the mystery of my life's journey
My dear ones cannot follow the course of my life.
My colleagues cannot figure out the styles and phases of my life
My companions are not able to walk with me.

That is why
They feel my company no more.
They are not able to grasp the meaning of my virgin words.

That is why
They are not able to have a dialogue with me.

That is how the motiveless journey
Of the solitary traveller
On the solitary Path
Goes on and on and on .....

Letting Go of International Travel

On the second of October, 1990, I gave a talk in Santiago Chile on "Gandhi's Relevance to the Western world." The president of Chile was not well then but his brother, a famous lawyer, attended, and under his chairmanship, in a very big auditorium, I gave the talk on Gandhi. My health was very bad. I had a virus infection, but it was a very big meeting and the next day was a conference for women, so I carried on my work. I spoke on the role of women in liberating the world from violence.

After the talks in Santiago, I left for the Andes Mountain. While in the Andes Mountain, bleeding started from the nose, from the throat, from the urine, and I became bed ridden.

In this last visit to Chile in 1990, people had come from ten or twelve countries for the camp. I said: "I am very ashamed but now my period or stage of travelling around the world is coming to an end. I will have to conclude now. I will not be able to return. I have a relationship with Chile, but now as the Catholic father had said, my purpose of coming there is over, you must look upon this as my last visit."

At that time I was so ill, I could not imagine I would be able to leave Chile alive.

You should listen to the story of my illness in Chile from Kaiser. I was in a state of near death and she said to me: "You cannot die here; you have to return to Bharat. I will take you back. You cannot die." There was no end to my suffering.

It has been a life of constant traveling and being with people. Not that I make any claims to solve problems but I shares my love and understanding wherever I live or travel.

On another occasion Vimalaji describes how she hopes that her inter action with enquirers, will inspire them to o follow the path of inner authenticity.

I spend my time with the inquirers with the hope that in some corner of the world, some human beings will get inspired to follow the path of inner authenticity, to follow the path of inner power and create a human being who does not go on defensive, does not become offensive, but expresses the magnificence and majesty of inner intelligence.

Spirituality as a science of life and living fascinates me, and that is why I talk about it in different ways. Whether it is at the Upanishad classes, working with the mantras one after another or whether it is at meditation camps.

One likes to point out to the fellow human beings, that you have inside of you immeasurable power, immeasurable strength, immeasurable, unnamable source of energy – energy which is neither glandular, muscular, neurological, chemical, cerebral – quite a different source of energy contained in the inner space, just reach out towards it, and it shall vitalize, it shall rejuvenate.

Working & Traveling in India

During the years that Vimalaji was traveling overseas, she was also working and traveling extensively throughout India. We will get an idea of the work Vimalaji was doing during that period by taking a glimpse of her schedule during the years 1962 to 1990.

Two months were spent at Mount Abu, where Vimalaji is available to inquirers and social activists from Gujarat and Rajasthan

Two months at Dalhousie in the Himalayas, to conduct intensive self education work with serious inquirers. The work of synthesis of science and spirituality is also carried on, mainly from Chandigargh Punjab, Dalhousie and Mount Abu.

Two months outside India for Meditation camps and discourses

Four months traveling through India, visiting the different projects and conducting Youth Camps as well as Meditation Camps

Two months for Human Brotherhood work. Human Brotherhood work is being carried out in Punjab, Gujarat, and Bihar. This work is meant to consolidate the forces of secularism, humanism and democratic socialism.

The talks began in Gujarat in 1968 when Trikamlal Seth invited Vimalaji to Ahmedabad and organized talks in his home so that people of Gujarat could hear her. After that Umashankar Joshi a poet of Gujarat, organized a series of talks on education in Mavlankar Lodge in Ahmedabad, and from then onwards there was no limit to the invitations that came pouring in.

As the work increased two Trusts were begun to facilitate the work.

Umashankarbhai, Kishansinghbhai and Trikamlal Sheth suggested that a Trust should be formed for printing of my books. Umashankarbhai and Kishansinghbhai were well-known writers of Gujarati literature. Because of the insistence of friends, the Trusts were founded.

Trikamlal Sheth gave Rs.10,000.00 and Kishanbhai gave Rs.10,000.00, and Vimal Prakashan Trust, Jeevan Yoga Foundation came into being. He said: "There should also be your camps." He made arrangements for Camps through Jeevan Yoga Foundation, and then Bapuji left, after an illness lasting twenty-one days. His wish was there, so the camps started and then the work in Gujarat spread.

The two Trusts that were begun to facilitate the work were Jeevan Yoga Foundation (for holding camps etc) and Vimal Prakashan Trust (for publishing the talks and articles).

The word "Jeevan Yoga" was coined by Vimalaji and she has described the meaning:

Jeevan Yoga means,
Life itself is Yoga
Life itself is Divinity
Life itself is Wholeness
Life itself is Unfragmented

Jeevan Yoga means,
An acceptance of
Life as non dual oneness, and
An acceptance of the necessity
of making the act of living,
an act of Atma Sadhana.
Every moment action takes place,
there should be absolute alertness,
that one does not slip into mechanical activity.

Jeevan Yoga means,
There has to be a scientific purification of
the body, mind, intellect and prana
so that they become the medium for scientific action.

Science demands that there must be
balance, equipoise and spontaneous awareness.

Unless there is truthful living
there can never be balance or equipoise.
Balance is the fragrance of equanimity.
Equanimity results in spontaneity.

If there is any desire for pleasures from the world,
living a truthful life is not possible.
If there is any fear of worldly sorrow, then also
living a truthful life is not possible.
Desire for pleasure is the root cause of raga-dwesha.

My life is an example of the Yagna
going on continuously.
Howsoever hard you may search
You will not find a sense of 'mine-ness'
Where then, can there be a sense of separation?

Perceiving the Truth
Communicating the Truth
Living the Truth

Promoting the Truth
Perceiving Life from moment to moment
Seeing the face of eternity
wrapped up in each moment.

Every moment is a manifestation of that Eternity
How can there be 'fragmentation' in Eternity?
How can there be 'perishability' in Immorality?
Life and Death are only a play of Prakriti.

Other work Vimalaji conducted in India, during the same period as the overseas travel is the focus of the next chapter.

After 1991 though Vimalaji stopped traveling in India and out of India, inquirers, social activists would come to meet Vimalaji in Abu and Dalhousie.

The inquirers would come either individually or in groups and Vimalaji would meet and interact with them, and so the work continued. Vimalaji wrote in l998.

The Vimal life
Is like the full-blossomed lotus

The subtle pollen of the pure lotus
Fills the surrounding with fragrance of its essence

Thirsty for the essence
Devotees come every day from all directions.

The love of "Lotus and the Bee" is age old
The One, eager to receive
The Other, eager to give all.
The ritual is perennial, repeating itself
Since time immemorial.

Introducing a New Dynamics of Human Relationships

We have seen the way Vimalaji traveled all over the world and throughout India doing the work, spreading the light, anchoring the light, igniting the light in others, encouraging all to be light bearers themselves, trying to raise the level of consciousness of humanity, but another salient feature of the work which may go unnoticed is the experimentations that were conducted in the field of human relationships.

Vimalaji introduced a new dynamics of human relationships, her life was spent exploring new ways of working together, new ways of living together, and new ways of inter-acting between student and teacher

The state of the consciousness while doing the work, the attitude towards the work, Vimalaji considered as important as the work itself.

It is very rare to see so much work done by one individual in one life time, in so many varied fields of activity, in so many countries of the world, without any organization, paid staff, propaganda, fund raising etc. And as we have seen, that is exactly what took place. Vimalaji wanted to experiment and see that people could work together, live together without any hierarchy, authority, regimentation, organizational structure, rules, regulations, and salaries, but live and work as one large family - self motivated, serving not an individual or a personality, but the cause they understood and respected.

Vimalaji never believed in doing the work using propaganda and advertisements, or holding large meetings and gatherings. As a very conscious decision Vimalaji saw to it that the work was not done on a large scale. She wanted to keep the human touch, the human contact. Vimalaji would say she prefers *"deep casting rather than broad casting"*.

The work in all the countries of the world was conducted and done, through Friends of Vimal Groups. And they were literally friends of Vimala, who got together, worked together, organized the meetings, the talks, the living accommodations and traveling for Vimalaji and then after the visit was over would disband, only to get together again if and when they wanted to invite Vimalaji to visit again. No centralization, no authority, no rigid structure, only working and meeting out of cooperation and friendship.

So there was living and working in friendship, living in cooperation, living without attachment, without dependency, without authority. Living and working together as one large joint family.

And then there was the living without taking any initiatives. This aspect of Vimalaji's understanding she lived fully even in the field of social action. Vimalaji only went to places where she was invited, when the invitation came she would respond, there was never initiative taken to go anywhere. All her travels around the world were on invitation. And then in whatever situation or circumstances she was put in, she would accept it, without trying to change it, no matter how uncomfortable or inconvenient it may be. Vimalaji had one philosophy in life since childhood *"ask not and reject not"* and in all the work she undertook she did not forget this.

This was the way Vimalaji lived her life and she would suggest the same way of living to social activists who came to her for guidance on how to solve social issues of violence and disharmony. Vimalaji would suggest that people should get together in the spirit of brotherhood, living and working together in cooperation and friendship, solving all social problems with that attitude and approach. And so the Punjab Biradari, Gujarat Biradari (Brotherhood), and then South Asia Fraternity were formed.

Another aspect of Vimalaji's working with her friends, was the great respect and freedom she would give to her colleagues and co-workers. Through all the years of work, in all the countries of the world, there were numerous colleagues and co-workers who were in contact with Vimalaji, with each one Vimalaji inter acted in a democratic way, giving everyone complete freedom and independence, there was no sense of authority. No insistence about anything, only suggestions were offered. If Vimalaji was asked only would she give her suggestion, otherwise it was left to the judgement of the co-workers, to do it right or make mistakes. (And learn from them!).

This way of living and inter-acting with others, giving everyone full independence and freedom, was also there with those who may be living with her, as Vimalaji would say: "Living in relationships, is to live with family in which I am born, the community in which I am born. I have to live with them, I have to watch them, understand their shortcomings and excellences, their tendencies so that I am not victimized by their imbalances but when the imbalance gets expressed, I will find ways of counter-acting the imbalance. In a family situation or in an organization you have to cooperate with that which you see to be right and truthful and proper, and you must have the courage to non-cooperate with that which you see, perceive and understand as improper, untruthful or unjust.

"In the family situation and in everyday life your understanding requires the fearlessness both to cooperate and to non-cooperate or as the Buddha used to say, you exercise the power of ignoring. For instance you ignore the anger of the other and you respond to the need of the situation."

In a poem, Vimalaji expressed her ideas on relationships thus:

I am not merely breathing
I am actually Living
Every minute, every second!

I don't spread a web of relationships.

In fact relationships are my
doorways to freedom.

I live out the hidden freedom
in relationships.

Vimalaji also experimented with a new approach to the Guru – Shishya or Teacher – Student relationship. Though born in India, living in India and speaking about spiritual truths and Yoga beyond meditation, Vimalaji did not take the role of a guru. She was accessible to one and all, but very alert that people did not set her up on a pedestal, considering her as someone special to be worshipped. She behaved like an ordinary human being, inter-acting with others, giving all an opportunity to inter-act with her and to view how a person can live in the state of Samadhi and yet carry out the routine activities of daily living. She was available for enquirers who wanted to meet with her and seek guidance about their spiritual search. There was guidance given without any sense of authority, without any insistence that it be followed, no rules and regulations to be followed. The emphasis was on the Understanding. Once the understanding was there it would surely flow into action.

In a poem written on Guru Poornima day in 1986 Vimalaji draws the attention of the enquirer to the importance of the Guru principle and not the personality of the Guru.

Those in whom total trust
In the Guru principle remains steadfast
For their welfare the Guru principle is forever alert.

Forever auspicious is the state of the Guru.
Forever auspicious is the Guru principle.

May trust and devotion forever dwell in that very principle
Which is the good, the eternal, the unmanifest
Which is beyond the yonder.

Seek ye the Other
In the very frame of your own body.

Seek ye the good
In the very space of your own consciousness.

Relate with the good
by being good yourself.

Worship the Guru
By being the worthy Guru yourself.

So Vimalaji lived and worked, showing how one translates one's understanding into action. She would often say:

"The content of life is the organic inter-relatedness. In this organic inter-relatedness you share your life with the other, and you become enriched by that sharing. There is not the giving and taking, but there is mutuality and reciprocity, even between the earth and myself, between the sun, the moon and myself, between the emptiness of space and myself - it is constant sharing.

"I have seen that Life is inter-relatedness. To live with the awareness of that inter-relatedness is to receive what is necessary, to share what you can and to live with a sense of gratitude.

"One feels very grateful to life that one is alive, the whole life is divine, and the whole life is divinity"

*

Chapter Seven

Unique Vigilance Over India & Asia

The Light Focuses

Brings fully alive
the rich ancient heritage of Asia,
and clarifies how the wisdom of the land
inspires solutions
to the challenges of
democracy, leadership and new economic
approaches.

Preserving the Honour of the Rishis

Do this much 'O Lord'!
Please save this country
Look after the people
Let not democracy disappear
Let not the bond of affection break
Do this much 'O Lord'!
Oh Compassionate One.

The oneness
should be maintained
The humanness
should not be stamped out
Take care of the brotherhood and equality.
The pride and honour of the Rishis
should be preserved and protected
Do this much 'O Lord'!
Oh Compassionate One.

... Vimala

Chapter Seven

Unique Vigilance Over India & Asia

The Light Focuses

A New Vision For India

Vimalaji considers herself a citizen of the world, but also believes that one has a responsibility to the country in which one is born. Though one may not be in the mainstream of society, earning a livelihood, one still has a responsibility to maintaining the general welfare of the people. Even if one is a Sanyasi by choice one cannot be a burden on society.

In addition to Vimalaji's contributions in the fields of spirituality and social work in India and overseas, she has contributed much to Indian polity by writing articles, giving talks, attending seminars, holding camps, doing padyatra, meeting with individuals and groups. Vimalaji's articles were published in Hindi in over forty newspapers of northern India, *in the English Magazine "The Invincible," and in Gujarati publications.*

Vimalaji feels it is very important for the whole of Asia to keep democracy alive in India. She keeps herself informed about the socio-economic and political situation of the region: "Though politics is not my cup of tea, I do study, observe and reflect about the political problems facing India and the world at large." She feels it is the destiny of India to bring about a cultural revolution in the world, as well as on the home front.

India is a land of Rishis, Yogis, Gurus and Saints. This is a land where a science of life and living blossomed. We call it spirituality. This science proclaimed thousands of years ago, and proclaims even today, that Life is an indivisible, homogeneous wholeness; that it is non-fragmentable; that Life is a totality in which everything is related to everything else.

It is this unity of Life that Gandhiji called Truth. He used to say: "Truth is my god. Truth is my strategy and Truth is my defence." It is the mission of India to proclaim this message of unity and indivisibility of Life from housetops, first in this country and then throughout the world.

If the world is to free itself from the menace of religious fundamentalism, if India is to protect itself against casteist and communalist fundamentalism, we will have to turn to the perennial source of spirituality.

The second message of this ancient science is about the nature of Life and subsequently that of man. Spirituality says Life is divine. That is to say it is neither only matter nor only energy. It is matter, energy plus an absolute ground of existence.

Divinity of Life indicates the togetherness of the visible, the invisible and the infinite. Today physics is on the threshold of metaphysics. It is on the verge of getting integrated with spirituality.

Acharya Vinobaji had indicated in 1957 that the days of organised religions are over. The era of the synthesis of science and spirituality is drawing near. It is the mission of India to conduct a systematic research and formulate a new perspective of total life

Gandhiji tried to replace the motivations of assertion, aggression, conflict and confrontation with those of humanity, friendship, sharing and cooperation. It is not struggle that is the fundamental principle of life; it is friendship and cooperation.

It is the mission of India to apply these values to every field of action, and educate people in the psychology of sharing.

Keeping Gandhian Philosophy & Values Alive

Gram Swaraj

It is necessary for all of us at this time, to refresh our memories of the history behind the movement started by Gandhi and later carried on by Vinoba, and the philosophy they developed by living it, through the sweat, the blood of their lives. Thus their philosophy will stand true through the ages.

Gandhi after due consideration, realised that the real heart of the country was in the villages, and if one wanted to change the country one started from the soil, from the farm and the farmer. Before Gandhi, there have been many revolutions attempted in the world, some successful and some unsuccessful. From all of them he noticed that changing of political power, does not bring about a change in the human being.

Gandhi tried to change the whole motivation of revolution. Emphasis was not on the end, but on the means of appealing to the non-violence in the heart of every human being. And Vinoba after him, appealed to the compassion, the sense of justice in the heart of every human being, every human heart was appealed to. The work began from Faith in that, and it got its strength from that too. And so the Bhoodan movement was a success, not so much for the land it distributed, but for its unique approach.

The times have changed now and our ways and methods too will have to change to keep pace with the changing times. Now the attitude and approach of the workers will have to change towards the villager. He no longer goes to give, but to encourage the villager to get together and find out for themselves what they need, and what they can do together to elevate their present condition. So he helps to instil self-reliance and draw out the initiative of the villager.

It is not sufficient to raise the standard of living of the people, but the crying need of the times and of the country, is to raise the level of consciousness of the people. For this task the cadre of workers will have to be different, they will have to have a different basis, they will have to be dedicated Jeevan Sadhak, and the foundation will be spirituality. For this purpose workers will be given special training for at least one year to prepare them for this kind of work.

Creating Gram Swaraj is the real need of the country, and we will have to build from below from the village level. Seventy-two percent of the population of India lives in the villages and they are going to be the architects of real independent Bharat. For Gram Swaraj more sacrifice, penance is necessary.

Swaraj for Gandhi was not only Indians taking over the British structure of governing. He had something different in mind. It meant to him the Swaraj of the village people.

Gandhi wanted India to be federation of village republics. The people should be educated to govern themselves. There should be a village gram Sabha or village government in each village taking care of the judiciary, the legislature and administrative responsibilities.

For the creating of Gram Swaraj two things are necessary: One is individuals who are capable of governing themselves, their bodies, their speech and their actions Individuals learning to live without any gross imbalances Hence one aspect of gram Swaraj is self education of the individual

The second aspect of Gram Swaraj is the creation of Gram Sabha, that is individuals coming together in the villages, and governing their own affairs, like housing, sanitation, setting up their own courts and defence force, developing cottage industries and units for maintaining cattle, setting up Satsang Mandal for their cultural development.

Vimalaji makes it a point to keep a vigil over the government and its activities.

In 1981 Vimalaji wrote: "This government is against Gandhian thoughts, against people and against Democracy. It is a devilish government; it will have to be removed. If we will be able to remove it or not I do not know, but it will have to be done. Gandhi is a representative of a Humanitarian approach to social and political problems.

Those who trust in Gandhian life and vision must get together; they must get together not only for discussion but for action. The movement on a nation level seems impossible but on a state level it is possible for the workers are sitting there.

Let us not release negative energies but start with whatever we have in hand. Let us take up the different issues, get the moral sanction of the people behind them and show the government that there are people in the country who believe in moral force, in spiritual force and who will not sit idle and listen quietly to what is happening in the country.

Besides the articles and talks given on the relevance of Gandhi and his teachings, Vimalaji travelled through out the country sharing these ideas.

Focus Of Guidelines On India

Keeping Democracy Alive

One of the aspects of the work done in the field of Indian polity was educational. Vimalaji always emphasised that education of the electorate has to take place, along with any other action program.

Vimalaji felt a very important part of the work of social activists was to educate the electorate by organising classes in which the people are explained what is meant by the terms: Democracy, Freedom, Secularism, Central Government, State Government, Elections, Voting – its use and misuse. And to inform the people about their rights as citizens in a democracy, what they can expect from the government, the municipality etc.

"We have attained our Independence and are a democracy but democracy means government of the people, by the people, for the people, but where are the PEOPLE? We have never educated the illiterate masses on their role as citizens of a democracy.

"Democracy is factually the art of governing by the sanction of people's consent. It is application of non violence to politcs and administration. In order to secure the consent of the people, you require innate respect for the people. You cannot compel people through money, muscle power etc to extend their consent. You cannot fight or win elections with a war psychology".

"A decade of collective austerity, a decade of voluntary organised social service, a decade of individual and collective discipline, a decade of intellectual clarity and psychological integrity shall save the country and pull up the collapsing democracy. It shall then enable us to materialise what Gandhiji used to call Hind Swaraj, what Vinobaji calls Gram Swaraj and what our beloved Jaiprakash used to call a Humanitarian Humane Society"

Another aspect of the work, was to actively work for upholding democracy. When democracy itself was in danger in the seventies, and a state of Emergency had been declared by the then Prime Minister, then all out effort was made to save the democracy and Vimalaji gave full moral support to Jai Prakash Narayan who led the country against this onslaught of its democracy.

Keeping Secularism Alive

Vimalaji believed that Secularism had to stay in India, it was a part of the Indian cultural heritage. Numerous articles were written and when required Vimalaji would herself go marching through areas in the throes of communal riots and violence, to bring about harmony among the different communities, for she felt:

"India is a multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural country. If this country can bring about a harmonious way of living together among all these groups, it could be a guide to the world. Though it would sound like a Utopia, it is the destiny of India to bring about a cultural revolution in the world including the home front."

A Vision of a Federal Structure

I consider that the Federal System of Government is more suitable to India than a unitary system of government. In a federal system there is equality between the federal government and the different states. In the present situation the state government have been mere agents of the central government

Besides this it was also Gandhiji's dream to have a federation of village republics. "India has not become a federation of village republics as Gandhiji had visualised. The Swaraj of Gandhiji's dreams is yet to materialize.

A Vision of Panchayati Raj

In recent times, when social activists would come to meet Vimalaji for guidance and suggestions for action programs, Vimalaji would consistently suggest that they could work in the villages to help the villagers establish local self government bodies (called Panchayats). The governance of the villages should be by the villagers themselves, free from any party politics.

The concept of Gram Panchayats or local self·government was not something new but due to centralized politics it had become ineffective. For its reconstruction Vimalaji suggested that:

The 'Gram Sabhas', the Gram Panchayats, should be set free from the clutches of political, religious and mafia leadership. The Local self-government institutes must be handed over to non-party citizens. Elections for local self-government must be by the non-party candidates in a thoroughly democratic manner.

The Village communities will have to be built up anew. The building up process will require incorporating economic independence, hence the Panchayat must have the freedom to collect revenue and create employment potential.

All raw materials in the villages should be converted into finished products through Industries owned by Panchayats. As we are an agricultural country we have to develop rural industrialization and enable agriculture to become self- sustaining and evolve into a source of peace and prosperity for the rural population. No industrialization in any part of the country at the cost of agriculture and at the cost of the rural population should be tolerated at all.

Preserving the Unity of the Country

Besides keeping vigilance over the socio-political situation in the country, Vimalaji was concerned that the land of

Rishis and Yogis and its cultural integrity had to be safe guarded. She was also very alert when there was danger of outside aggression, as we see from poems she wrote:

We are the children of the Rishis.
We are the inheritors of the Rishis.
Every ready to risk our lives.
Ever ready to sacrifice our lives.
Every ready to take care of the people
who come under our protection.
Ever ready to protect the ancient Dharma.
Every ready to protect the age old
spiritual culture of Bharat.

And

My life force shines in the eyes
of those fighting at the borders.
My life force is merged with theirs.

This frame of flesh and bones is in Dalhousie.
This frame of flesh and bones is in Shivkul.
But, my being is alert and guarding the frontiers.

My body is the sacrificial altar
And every breath is the offering in that fire.

And

In the tiny cottage of skin and bones
The Atman resides as the guardian of Bharat.
Atal Bihari is the Prime Minister
Vimal Bihari is the Prime Guardian of Bharat.

Unique Vigilance Over India

Work during the Emergency

In 1974-1975 the Indian government declared a state of emergency. Jai Prakash was arrested, and I think the Sarvodaya movement began scattering in various directions. The split came when Jay Prakash began to fight against the totalitarian tendencies in the Indian central administration. Until that time there had not been a political dimension to the movement. So Jai Prakash began speaking out against the heavy-handed actions of the central government, bringing a political dimension to Sarvodaya that the workers had not been trained for, were not ready for. Not the politics of power or parties, but the politics of people. And many who had faith in Jai Prakash as much as in Vinoba, accompanied J.P. in his Total Revolution Movement, while some others felt the Total Revolution Movement should not be part of Sarvodaya Movement.

As I see it, Sarvodaya thought and Sarvodaya government have been enriched by J.P. as much as it has been enriched by Vinoba. If Jai Prakash had not stepped in, in 1973, and gone round the country in 1974 and exposed the totalitarian tendencies of the government of India, I do not know whether there would be democracy in India today.

If you study the history of India, you will find that whenever there have been political defeats, it is the spiritual source of strength that has helped the people of India. It is only those people who had access to the spiritual source who could lead the people.

I did not take an active part in J.P's. Andolan. J.P. came to Ahmedabad in 1974, and gave a talk at the Kakaria Football grounds. He said: "Call Vimalaben." I responded to him a note sent through Shrikantbhai that said: " J.P., I am in agreement with the main purpose of your Andolan (Movement), but I cannot take an active part. Because I am a spiritual person, I cannot accept the means you are using and the people you are taking with you to do the work. I can give you moral support, and I have written many articles in Antar Ni Waat, in support of your principles. You have my full support and moral cooperation, but I cannot participate in your meeting."

When Prabhavatiji, J.P's wife, was ill and staying in a Bombay hospital, I went to be with her for ten days. I would sing bhajaans for her, and J.P. would say: "Since you have come, how happy is Prabha." I could not do much service but stayed for ten days. Then she was moved to Delhi, and they called me from Assam to be with her in Delhi.

She told me: "Vimalben I am very worried, people will take advantage of this man (J.P.)." She had told me the same thing, in her illness in South India. Even in her last illness she had one worry, that J.P.'s close friends will misuse his kind nature. I said: "You leave the worry with me." She said: "I may not be able to meet you again so I called you from Assam. I called all his friends, parliament members and party members, and said: "J.P. is a Sadhu Purush in politics. I don't know if you have recognized it, but after I leave don't make, misuse of his saintliness." Even J.P. said to me: "Look she keeps worrying about this." I stayed with her for two days.

In June 1975, during the time of emergency, we were in Dalhousie. Jai Prakashji was arrested in Delhi for speaking out against the imposition of emergency and was imprisoned. A colleague of Jai Prakashji, Yashwantrai Khurana, brought a cassette of J.P.'s talk to Dalhousie. I translated the speech into Hindi and Gujarati. We sent the Gujarati translation to Amulakbhai for printing, and the Hindi translation we printed in Bombay. Before the first of July, thousands of copies of J.P.'s talk were printed in Hindi and Gujarati were printed and circulated by hand.

Minu Masani helped take J.P.'s talk to Madras, and arranged for translation into Tamil.

J.P. was kept in jail in Chandigargh. We made efforts through Yashwantra Kkhurana to contact doctors at Chandigargh hospital and explore the possibility of sending some needed things to J.P. We also made efforts to contact J.P. directly and indirectly. J.P. was able to send messages about what he needed through Anandmai Mai, who was sympathetic to the blight of J.P.

During the state of emergency I had to give the C.I.D. (Central Intelligence Department) information about my complete program of activities. They sent copies of my program to Jaipur and to Delhi. Wherever I went in India, the C.I.D. police would go with me. Even when we were in Dalhousie, a C.I.D. man would be at the gate and would make note of the names of the visitors. They used to come at least once a month to Shivkuti. They searched the Shiv Kuti library and removed J.P.'s books. I sent my correspondence with J.P. and translation of his talks to Krishnamai's house. They asked how many times has J.P. had come to Mount Abu. He had been in Abu three times and stayed in Shiv Kuti. All this was a part of a game, so I never spoke about it. Those living together with me know about it. Kishanbhai used to give advice what had to be done and what not.

We used to print a small magazine in Gujarati, called: "*Antar Ni Waat,*" which had articles in support of J.P.'s position. The government brought a case against it, and Arvindbhai and Kalyanbhai were taken away to the police station in a police van.

In August, I left for Europe. When in November I reached Norway, I received the news that some officials in the Indian government were planning to impound my passport.

In the time of emergency we had to go through a lot of such incidents, but we did not consider it a difficulty. I told all my Satsangi friends that this is the language of satsang: anything could happen. One's head could be cut off or all one's property could be taken away. I asked my Satsangi friends to take permission from their spouses if they want to be part of this satsang. Bhabhi and Kalyanbhai said: "Whatever happens we are with you." So my friends stayed with me throughout the emergency.

I remember in November 1975, I returned to India, and found that no Sarvodaya worker was ready to celebrate J.P.'s birthday. Shri Zamindar who lived in Indore was the only one who was ready. I said to him: "Even if only ten people come, it does not matter, but in Hindustan, we must celebrate his birthday." We informed the police and there was a sabha. No Sarvodaya workers came, but other people came.

I was in Ceylon in 1975, when I received a telephone call that J.P. was released from jail because of extreme ill health, and went to Jaslok Hospital. I flew from Colombo to Bombay and went to see J.P. in the hospital. *(The government under Indira Gandhi has jailed J.P. and were convinced he was about to die and so had released him. His friends took him to Bombay to give him the best treatment.*

Though he recovered, his kidneys were permanently damaged as a result of the imprisonment and the treatment he received in jail.) He was semi-conscious. I put my hand on his head and said "J.Pji., I have come." With difficulty he opened his eyes and said:"It is Vimalbhen." Then he asked me: "On one hand is Baba and on the other Indiraji, what will happen to the country?" I said: "We will worry about the country together; first you get well." He became unconscious again. I sat with him for hours. When he came back to consciousness, he would say: "What will happen to the country?" Stayed in Jaslok Hospital, there is Indian Express Towers in Mumbai, we would go there. *(The Indian Express is the name of a newspaper that supported J.P. in his Movement against the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her dictatorial ambitions.)* When his health improved, first he was in intensive care, would stand at a distance and he would call me, would pat his head and come away.

During J.P.'s illness, there was a celebration, Amrat Motsav, in Patna. I attended the celebration along with ten to fifteen people. Kapuri Thakur was Chief Minister and on the issue of Reservation at the Amrut Motsava Shabir stones were thrown. Stones fell on Acharya Kriplani, and I also received a few stones on that occasion. People got up and covered Kriplani and J.P. to protect them from the stones.

J.P. was seriously ill during the Amrit Motsava. When I went to meet him at Mahila Charka Samiti, he said: "Now I won't live long, now I am going; what will happen to the country I don't know." There was a deep sorrow within him, "Why does not Baba come to meet me? I am on death bed, why does not Baba come?" I told Dada what J.P. said about Vinobaji (Baba). J.P. said to Dada: "If Bapu (Ghandhiji) was here, he would come to meet me; why does Baba not come?" He would complain like a child, and Dada would say because Vinobaji is not Gandhiji, and he would cry and explain it.

In my last meeting with J.P., he said: "I am very worried about the country; what will happen?" I said to him: "See J.P. as long as I am alive, I will not let your lighted torch, mashal, be blown out. My ways of working are different; I have my own limitations, but living within those limitations, whatever work I can do, I will do." He was very happy, and tears just started flowing.

This sentence that I spoke to Jai Prakash was later misused by Nirmalaji. She told Indiraji that Vimalaji will run J.P.'s Andolan and take the leadership etc. So the secret police were keeping a watch over me until 1977. From 1975 to 1977 each letter I received had been opened and read. Even letters from Ahmedabad used to take ten to twelve days to reach me in Mount Abu. I had to go through a number of such difficulties.

Loksatsang Yatra

After the Bhoodan phase ended, Vimalaji was not actively involved in social work mainly because of the ear injury and the inner transformation that had taken place. Instead Vimalaji was busy traveling to Europe and USA on invitation, *to share her understanding. During the Emergency days Vimalaji was fully behind Jai Prakashji and his efforts to bring back democracy. Vimalaji helped translate and publish in Gujarati his jail diaries, for that there was constant vigil over her by the police and even attempts to arrest her.*

It was only after Jai Prakash passed away, that Vimalaji again took active part in social action, this she did along with her constant travels abroad for talks and meditation camps, and meditation camps in India.

Vimalaji told Jai Prakash that she would not to let the lighted lamp (mishal) be blown out in India. The Mishal for which all the freedom fighters fought and gave their lives, for which Gandhiji fought and sacrificed his life, for which Jai Prakash fought and died for.

So in January 1980, Vimalaji started the Lok Satsang Yatra. In a letter to friends joining the Pilgrimage Vimalaji wrote:

We are all set upon an unprecedented adventure in the lives of religious enquirers. All of you very willingly decided to join the campaign for awakening and activating the people of India. Our concern is to awaken that consciousness of the Divinity. It will confer upon man a sense of decent self-respect, dignity and indispensability of individual freedom.

Unfortunately some of our well-wishers feel that we should postpone the Pilgrimage in case it is misunderstood by the rulers that be in Delhi. My concern is with the rightness and justness of our action. I am willing to face the risks if there be any.

I happen to be an individual whose life has been dedicated to the Divine in Man. I have never asked anything of man or God; hence, there have been neither gains nor losses in my life. Naturally those whose lives are not totally dedicated to the cause of the divine, are entitled to be cautious and circumspect about what they do. My sympathy will be with those who find themselves in such a state of mind.

My words are addressed to every member of the group. We shall live together and move as a family unit for about ten weeks in all. We are traveling not for personal pleasure or enjoyment, but for learning to serve our fellow human beings and cleanse our hearts through that service. The cleaning of the heart creates humility, receptivity and unusual strength of integrity.

Vimalaji describes some aspects of the pilgrimage.

Because of the assurance I gave to Jai Prakashji I thought of going on a Yatra through the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In those five states we will begin a Lok Sampark Yatra to come into contact with the people. I called the Satsangi friends and said look Satsang or spirituality takes the whole of life in its consideration, intimate connection. This one great being, Maha Purush, has taken my word. When a great individual speaks about something once, twice, thrice it means he has an expectation that is why he talks about it.

I spoke with my friends, whatever we can do, we must do. We have to move together. We will pool all our resources and go on the Yatra. Mukund Savani met me in California in 1976 and took part in the camps and meetings. He heard of the Yatra plans, bought a Mini bus for the yatra and offered to drive the bus himself. He never let me feel beholden.

Ten people volunteered for the yatra. We decided who would participate in the yatra in which state. We agreed we would not to stay in any institute or in anyone's house; we would stay in Dharamshalas. We used to take all our food with us.

In one day we would stop in three places. We would leave early in the morning and reach the first village. When we arrived at the village, one group of us would initiate person-to-person contact with villagers, another group would distribute literature and a third group would take care of administrative and domestic matters. We contacted many people, had many meetings with villagers, and we printed thousands of folders in different languages. We never asked anyone for money. We withdrew whatever money we had in the bank and used it for printing literature.

We would have the breakfast in the first village, then we would go to another town and have lunch there. In the evening we would reach the third town and have a prayer meeting in the dusk.

In short this kind of Yatra, I conducted for the first time in India. We moved as if one mobile family was traveling, dividing the work among ourselves.

The first phase of the Yatra or Pilgrimage began in January 1980 and covered the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The second phase of the Lok Satsang Yatra began at five in the morning under a clear starlit sky on 18th September, 1980, with a group of friends from Mount Abu. This phase of the yatra covered places in the states of Punjab, Himachal and Haryana. In Punjab on meeting the people at the grass root level, Vimalaji sensed already the talk of a separate state that was going on there, and tried to alert the government. If the dissatisfaction had been nipped in the bud then, much blood shed and bitterness could have been averted later on.

We went to Himachal, to Punjab. In Punjab for the first time we heard in Batala, Gurdaspur the talk of Khalistan (creating a country in India separate from India). We heard talk of Khalistan in the Youth Meetings, in the Meetings for women. Immediately, I wrote a letter to Indira Gandhi about what I was hearing and suggested that immediate steps should be taken to stop it, otherwise we will have trouble. Indira Gandhi reply was we have our own contacts.

The participants in the Yatra would go door to door meeting and contacting the people, and in every village they visited they would encourage the villagers to form Satsang *groups. They would also motivate the villagers to take initiative and do things for themselves.*

The work begun by Mahatma Gandhi, continued by Vinoba and Jai Prakash Narayan, was continued and given another aspect by Vimalaji, who linked it with spirituality. Vimalaji feels that along with raising the standard of living of the people one should also raise the level of their consciousness. For this, the attitude of the workers should change; the workers would be committed and dedicated not only to doing the work but to living as Jeevan Sadhaks (enquirer) while doing the work.

Camps Held

The Lok Satsang Yatra helped to motivate and activate Sarvodaya Workers all over India. (Social activists working in tune with the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and Vinobaji) Soon they began inviting Vimalaji to their camps and meetings. So from 1980 onwards there were numerous Sarvodaya worker camps that Vimalaji attended. From 1978 to 1988, Vimalaji was asked to attend a total of 247 camps held in eighteen states of India.

For example, in 1981 alone, Vimalaji was requested to conduct 7 Meditation Camps, 13 Constructive Workers Camps, 5 Camps on Gram Swaraj, 13 Peace Work Camps, 4 Youth Camps and 3 Teachers' Camps, throughout the country. These types of Meetings, Camps and Talks continued throughout the years till Vimalaji stopped traveling in India in 1992.

In the camps Vimalaji spoke about the role of the constructive worker, dealing with corruption, counteracting the anti-social elements, about woman power (Stree Shakti) and the different kinds of work that can be taken up, giving practical suggestions and guidance.

To the Constructive workers, Vimalaji spoke specifically about:

Giving a spiritual foundation to the work, requesting them to become Jeevan Sadhakas, inquirers of life. They will have time for their work and for their Sadhana, as the two will go together. The worker as Sadhak now learns to live by his understanding. He learns to progress from living the roles of a doer, an experiencer to an observer, until the role of the observer too disappears. Then he responds from the depth of inner silence, such that in every action and speech of his, this inner silence is expressed. Then still further, he lives and response from the state of Samadhi.

Learning to use Atma Bal or the inner strength of the Soul for the work. Living a life of absolute honesty and integrity. Living a life of self-reliance, where there will be no hiring and keeping of servants in the centers, for the work is part of Sadhana too, and the other workers have become part of the family. So there is no paid worker in the center, and no employee/employer relationship and so no unions either.

To keep the units of work small, for then they are easy to manage and do not become impersonal. There is no talk of profit and profit incentives. Become self-sufficient and learn to stand on your own feet, do not take government aid or grants. This is total revolution, this is what Gandhi and Vinoba wanted us to achieve. For that values have to change.

Giving suggestions for concrete action, Vimalaji spoke about:

Forming a Peace force or Shanti Sena, whose work will be to withstand and rectify any injustice done in their locality. The peace force will work by calling a public meeting to notify the town members of what has taken place, by voicing their concern, dissatisfaction and denunciation of what had taken place, by taking out processions, holding prayer meetings. They also organize and give legal advice and legal aid to the needy, when necessary.

Forming a citizens group who will look after the welfare of the youth of the town. By providing a gymnasium for the youth to exercise in and learn Yoga Asanas and Pranayama and providing them some wholesome food like milk and grams. By providing Workshops where the youth can have the opportunity of learning a trade and earning at the same time. By putting up small-scale industries so that the youth can be gainfully employed.

Forming a Women's group, who will look after some of the moral issues of the town, by organizing prayer meetings, by taking out processions and singing religious songs and chanting, by speaking out against the habit of drinking and illicit liquor

Forming a citizens group who will educate the electorate, by holding classes to explain the meaning of the terms democracy, freedom, secularism, central government, state government, elections, voting, its use and misuse.

Peace Work

In the State of Gujarat: Porbandar

Vimalaji carried out Peace work beginning in 1980. In 1980 there was a request from a resident of Porbandar to help rid the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi of anti-social elements. Vimalaji accepted the request and the work began. A Peace Mission was set up, where volunteers lived and worked. The workers took out processions every morning and walked through the different residential areas in the city, singing and chanting bhajans. Door to door personal contact took place between the people and the volunteers, pamphlets were distributed explaining the work being done, meetings for women were held, public satsang meetings were held every evening.

Vimalaji's message to the people was:

Let us be free from fear, let us make the city a fearless place to live in, let us have faith in the Divinity within each one. It is the people who are responsible for the rise of the anti-social elements; we give them importance and prestige in society, quietly acquiescing and accepting all the injustices and crimes they commit. To stop the corruption every citizen will have to cooperate and do his bit by stopping the purchase of smuggled goods and by giving and taking bribes. Form volunteer Peace Corps to oppose all injustice in an organised way, so the people become independent; there is no other way.

People were at first taken by surprise and disbelief at these peaceful demonstrations and work of fearlessness, they slowly came out of their homes and joined in the meetings; for the last meeting there were over 1,500 people present. Committees were formed for follow-up work and padyatra of the district and its 77 villages was planned and undertaken.

In Dholka

Peace work was taken up in Dholka in 1981, again at the request of citizens who were concerned at the communal clashes and conflicts. Vimalaji visited the place and had a number of sessions with the citizens and a program for peace work was chalked out with the cooperation of the citizens.

In Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad, a city in Gujarat, was prone to communal riots and when the riots broke out in 1985, Vimalaji visited and *marched through the disturbed areas of the city with concerned citizens and a Peace Centre was set up. Then Gujarat Biradari , a brotherhood of men and women of goodwill was formed, to work towards bringing about peace and harmony among the different communities and help educate the people in living with friendship and cooperation. Before that Vimalaji took a tour of the terror stricken areas,*

Vimalaji describes how the work of Gujarat Biradari began:

It was in 1985, that communal riots on unprecedented scale broke out at Ahmedabad. I was invited by the social workers of Gujarat to discuss a way out of the cultural catastrophe. For the last seven years I have been organising youth camps in Gujarat. More than 2000 youths had participated in them.

I decided to appeal to them to launch a cultural campaign, to awaken the people to the need of protecting the secular character of the Indian polity and protecting the national integrity, through stimulating national consciousness. I suggested building up a loose brotherhood to highlight cultural as well socio-economic problems facing Gujarat.

In the state of Punjab

From 1984 to 1988 Vimalaji did much work in Punjab, travelling throughout the state meeting all the important leaders, writing letters and articles founding the Punjab Insani Biradari.

This was the time when there was talk of separating from India and having a separate state and the time of the terrorists being active.

Vimalaji describes how her work began in Punjab

The work in Punjab began in 1980 with a visit to the border districts. Then again in 1984, I took a tour of the affected areas talking to the people and explaining to them the dangers of fights with each other that were instigated by the governmental.

I have faith in God and trust in human beings and do not believe that they really wish to fight with one another; they would rather live in peace. I am not a person belonging to any political party or working for any government agency. I have travelled throughout the country meeting the people and have seen how the people are divided, how differences of caste, class and religion are emphasised. People who once were living in harmony and friendship now instigate fights with each other. People do not split up on their own. People have to become united and united withstand any efforts to divide them and instigate them to fight each other. The energy of the people is not united hence the government is taking more and more control of their lives and entering into every field of their lives

Insani Biradari was launched to protect the unity and integrity of Punjab and through it that of India. To create a peoples' cultural front, in order to give correct perspective of the problems confronting India. To establish moral values and inculcate among the people a respect for democratic institutions and the willingness to operate them properly.

We recognise every human being as our brother or sister and as a fellow citizen of the country. We recognise our responsibility to live and let live the fellow beings without strangling the cultural identity of any group. We recognise that violence cannot be the way of life. Therefore Insani Biradari condemns the cult of violence whosoever follow it.

Insani Biradari will be a cultural and non-political brotherhood. Its purpose is to awaken a sense of responsibility among the people towards maintaining the unity and integrity of the country as a whole and of Punjab in particular.

In the state of Assam

In January 1981 Vimalaji visited Assam as a movement had begun by the students against the apathy of the government. The people of Assam wanted the government to detect of infiltrators, taking 1951 as the base year and deporting those who come after 1971.

Vimalaji had many sessions with the citizens of Assam, with the representative of All Assam Students Union (AASU) who were spearheading the movement. For this work she had to travel into the interior of Assam.

Vimalaji also wrote letters to the Prime Minister explaining the significance of the movement:

> In the year 1980 I had travelled through seven northern states of India and spoken to people about Gram Swaraj and Lok Swaraj. No where have I come across such young patriots who have inclination towards Gandhian approach to life and have faith in parliamentary democracy as I found in Assam. Nowhere have I come across such serious minded and studious youth who dare to function on a non-party level. I request the Prime minister to resolve the tricky problem without any further delay.

Vimalaji participated in a convention of non-party social workers on Assam and wrote many articles stating the facts: "The Sun has risen in the East" and "Listen to the Call of the Assam Youth." These articles were published in papers throughout India.

To continue their struggle the students formed a political party (AGP) and in 1985 won the elections. Vimalaji wrote in December 1985:

> As the voice of non-racial, non-communalist, non-casteist and non-linguistic majority gathers strength and momentum, as it grows in power and articulation, the inhumane game of pampering, exploiting or intimidating minorities shall come to an end. It is the emergence of such a distinct voice of secular majority that we are waiting for with great hope and faith. We have called the victory of AGP as the second Dawn of Democracy. Democracy

dawned on paper in 1947, now it is becoming a fact, struggling to materialise for one year. Glory be to the people of Assam and her young valiant leaders.

Rural Reconstruction

The Chatargadh Research Center was founded in 1980 in Bikaner District of Rajasthan. It is a project for rural reconstruction work in a desert. The work will have a spiritual foundation. The workers will go to the villagers and start Satsang Mandals. Their main aim will be to make the villagers self-reliant, self-sufficient, able to take the initiative in solving their needs and problems. Raw materials of the village will not be exported to the cities but small scale industries will be set up by the villagers to process and produce their own goods. Study groups will be set up for the villagers and women and youth.

In 1981 a rural development project was taken up in Mandal, a small town 90 kms from Ahemdabad, surrounded by five villages. The main source of employment is agriculture. The work undertaken was to make available for the villagers expert advice on agriculture, cottage industries and small scale industries Work on digging wells, providing drinking water and building all-weather approach roads, all with the cooperation of the villagers, would be undertaken.

In 1982 a rural reconstruction centre was founded in Rajkot district. It does research and experiments in:

Enhancing the economic viability of keeping cows and oxen on farms.

Exploring solar energy and its application to cottage and village industries.

Organizing workshops for training rural youth in intermediary technology and youth camps for age's 18 to 28.

Opening basic education schools in surrounding villages as well as a hostel for post-basic education School started recently by the rural reconstruction centre.

The project covers twenty-five surrounding villages and has succeeded in getting cooperation from the people as well as the state government.

Vision Of A Spiritually Inspired Society

Vimalaji had a vision of individuals living in a society inspired by spiritual values, in 1993 she expressed her ideas in verse.

At the center of Individual life should be the Atman
And every bodily action should be for the Atman

The body should be used as an instrument
to serve the Atman

At the centre of collective Life
should be the essence of Divinity
Hence there must be a social structure in complete accord
with the essence of Divinity.
In the individual's life
The values of the Atman should always be at the center

In the collective life
The values that allow the manifestation
of Oneness with the all pervading Truth
should be at the center

An individual's life should be founded on
a happy, balanced and austere routine

The collective life should have as its foundation
a social structure
which is Spiritually oriented
with self disciple and freedom from exploitation and torture

At the individual level
not money but Paramatman
should be the foundation of life
Neither pleasure mongering nor renunciation
but restraint and equipoise
should be the aim of life

At the collective level
Not unlimited administration
but "Atma Shasan" which moves speedily
Not the control, suppression, torture or exploitation of Nature
But a harmonious dialogue with Her.

Education should be life oriented
And not a system
giving importance to logic, to thought and knowledge

The production and manufacturing
should be for the promotion of an austere, balanced life
And not for a pleasure-mongering life

The man-woman relationship
should be such which respects the sanctity of procreation

And should not be shallow, exploitative and anarchic
The family system
should be such which nourishes
the spirit of friendship and cooperation
And not one which enforces
the traditional rights, the individual rights
or the authority of an individual

The Pillars Of A New Human Society

In 2003 Vimalaji wrote about the birth of a new human society through a radically new approach to value based education.

Before the old order gets completely dismantled, by the onslaught of new globalized trends, or withers away by the weight of out of date philosophies, mankind will have to focus its energy on the vision of the new.

It has become evident that the human race is tired of 'war culture' and feels disgusted with the eruption of violence in every part of the world. It has started rejecting war, as a means of resolving international problems and domestic challenges. But a peaceful society cannot come into existence by merely wishing for it. The culture of peace and a society that can sustain such a culture, have to be shaped consciously, systematically and persistently, step by step.

Peace cannot breathe in an unjust society. If there is mutual exploitation, sanctioned by society and rendered legitimate through legislation, conflict, confrontation and violence would follow as a natural consequence. We will have to conduct a research and explore the avenues through which present society allows exploitation.

The challenge is to manage human relationships in such a way that conflict of interests becomes impossible. The fields of vested interests will have to be mercilessly liquidated. So that society does not get divided into classes, as owners, managers and laborers. There is no other way to eliminate trade unionism and the fragmentation of society into rich and poor. Whether it is agriculture, small and big scale industries, domestic or international trade, human beings will have to work as partners.

Perhaps that is what Mahatma Gandhi had meant by "Trusteeship in Industry." I visualize the possibility of village ownership of land in agriculture, and community ownership of industry in urban sector.

Intellectual and emotional freedom widens the horizons of enquiry and charges the person with a determination to understand the mystery of life and the meaning of relationship. The foundation of a New Peace Culture, a New Global Ethos is laid, perhaps in primary schools. It is the tender plant that needs all the loving care and protection that we can extend to it. Once the plant grows into a tree, it can defend itself against all odds of life.

I visualize the possibility of such a transformation in consciousness in the twenty-first century. It will not take place through existing institutions of religion or institutions of academic, theoretical information distribution. They have outlived their day. It is only through a radically new approach to value based education that a synthesis of science and spirituality would become a fact of daily life.

For a sustainable Peace Culture, these structures will have to be dismantled. A political structure, in which people can participate directly, will have to be evolved. Direct self-rule is possible in a face-to-face community, at the village level. In such rural communities, direct self-employment and direct self-rule, direct self-education and direct planning for the region are not only possible, but are required urgently.

Conflict of interest and division of society into class and caste brought about Party System and Party based governments. The corruption in political parties and even at the governmental level, have nearly become the rule of the day. The use of money power, muscle power and mafia power by the political parties and their governments, have become a disgusting phenomenon for the morally sensitive human community.

Therefore we plead that the center of power should be transferred to the grass roots level.

Mahatma Gandhi had visualized that India would become a Federation of Village Republics. Vinobaji had talked about Gram Sabha and Gram Raj, during his padyatra throughout India. Shri Jai Prakash Narayan had elucidated his vision of 'Janata Sarkar' (People's Government) and Participatory Democracy, in the last twelve years of his life. This is the way Peace lies.

South Asia Fraternity

Vimalaji had a special vision that the countries neighbouring India should get together as a loose brotherhood. As they have a common cultural background and history, they can live together in peace and harmony, and for that there should be people to people contact.

Vimalaji was a founding member of South Asia Fraternity. Shri Satyapal Grover of Servants of the People Society was actively involved in organising yearly camps for the students and citizens of the neighbouring countries. Vimalaji attended a few when she could or she would send her message that would be read to participants.

Vimalaji expressed her concern about the well-being of the South Asia countries through talks and articles to the youth who attended the South Asia Fraternity camps. Just as she was constantly thinking and writing about the problems facing

Indian polity Vimalaji was also thinking about South Asia as a whole. She hoped that problems would be solved through people-to-people contact and not on a government level.

Vimalaji gave similar suggestions on a yet wider scale, and suggested that the United Nations Organisation should give way to United People's Organization. At a convention organised by the United Nations Peace Committee in Chile in March 1985, Vimalaji pleaded that:

> A United Peoples' Organization should be established as the United Nations Organization is becoming an anomaly. As long as nations want to remain closed-in entities retaining sovereignty, they obviously cannot bring about world peace. Sovereign nations have vested interests and identification with territories, economic and political systems, as well as ideologies. They are interested in ideological or economic imperialism. Naturally though they get together at United Nations, they are divided into blocks. The two super powers and the third world countries are well known.
>
> The third world counties are again divided into small groups. Thus all try to protect their own interests, and want to use the platform of United Nations for their purpose. This cannot go on for long. The United Nations has lost its sanctions as it were. Hence some one has to work for the establishment of United Peoples' Organisation to replace the outdated United Nations Organisation and bring the people of the world together. The states divide. They do not unite. The people should get together, de-recognizing their governments and chalk out a peaceful strategy for sharing the planet on the basis of fraternity, equality and liberty.

If India could establish domestic peace and harmonious relationships between the union government and the state governments, it could lead the world on the path of United People's Organisation.

Vimalaji wrote many letters for South Asia Fraternity participants from 1990 to 2000, analyzing the problems facing South Asian countries, and the challenges facing the youth, and suggesting some guidelines.

South Asia Fraternity came into existence with the noble aspiration of developing a prosperous, humane democratic South Asia. The desire to awaken a regional consciousness with the determination to build up a regional self-reliant economy, based upon mutual cooperation was also behind the adventure.

Challenges Facing The Youth

The South Asia Fraternity youth, have to take a number of pledges, in order to counter-act the devastating trend of economic slavery. They will have to pressurize their respective governments, into developing self-reliant economy. There would obviously be a regional self-sufficiency and not that of one country. Reciprocal cooperation among the South Asia countries will be the basic requirement.

There will not be such genial reciprocity until they decide that no ethnic and communal fundamentalism or insurgency will be allowed to creep in the region. Will the

South Asia Fraternity youth pledge to educate the fellow youths in their countries to eschew the path of violence?

A determined campaign to educate the people informally in the basics of democracy, secular state and factual rural self-government will have to be launched in each country, at the earliest possible opportunity. It can develop into a regional campaign through people-to-people contacts, communications and inter-actions.

It is only through such regional movement, that South Asia Fraternity would be able to influence the tone of deliberations at SAARC Conventions.

-- No more poverty
-- No more starvation deaths
-- No more ethnic or communal violence.

Should be the watchwords of South Asia Fraternity Youth Community.

The challenge facing us all over the world is how to prevent the STATE from being anti-people. How to prevent the governments from becoming corrupt!

It seems to me, that centralization of agriculture and industrial production as well as distribution thereof is one of the root causes of corruption.

Over emphasis on material affluence, even at the cost of humanitarian concerns and moral values is another fundamental cause.

Imbalance in the ratio of population growth and growth in over all production is still another cause of corruption.

Lack of literacy and ignorance about the very meaning of Rights and Responsibilities, Law and Order or even Secularism and Democracy among the major sections of society, also contributes to permissiveness and corruption.

Will the youth study these problems and learn to handle them skillfully?

Man Based Development

South Asia Fraternity Camps should help expand the consciousness, build up character, and awaken the will to respond to the crisis confronting South Asian countries.

We, the countries of poverty-stricken, illiterate millions, have a responsibility to pool our manpower and other resources together, for evolving a human-based development process, along with retaining a democratic set-up in our societies.

Money-based and centralized industrial structures are totally irrelevant to our historical and cultural heritage. Unwarranted haste in accepting market economy in its totality or launching globalization of economy unconditionally is likely to prove dangerous.

We, the people of South Asian countries have a responsibility to reconcile ethnic, linguistic and religious identities with our respective national identity as well as a sound South Asian Identity. Our collective spiritual heritage, proclaiming the basic unity of Life, must become a motivation force for developing a new dynamics for democratic humane relationships.

We, the people of South Asia region have a sacred responsibility to demonstrate that men and women can live as equals and share all social powers as equal partners. Women have to take initiative in this noble endeavor.

Building a New Asian Economy

May I hope that we will build up a new Asian Economy keeping in mind that we are all children of one God, having reverence for all Life - be it mineral, plant, animal or human? Respecting the man-power and animal-power, taking hints from Mahatma Gandhi, who tried to build up a man-centered economy, we can develop a completely new way of industrialization, making use of alternative energies like solar, wind, waves etc.

Let us not copy the Western economics, which always depends on securing markets, leading to exploitation and then to militarization, to safeguard the exploitation. They have even converted war into an industry.

Once we follow the path of centralized industry and mass scale production we will neglect our manpower and animal-power and create economic compulsions to create markets in other countries.

Will the South Asian countries come together and find ways for developing an Economy for Peace? The present economic system is war based. It leads to violence and aggression. A world without war cannot come into being unless our economy finds a new basis.

Creating a New Regional Consciousness

The regionalization of economy shall not be sacrificed at the altar of globalization. Market economy shall not render the South Asian countries vulnerable to the demands and commands of the affluent West. It is only an economically self-reliant South Asia, which could meet the affluent European countries, U.K. and U.S.A. on the footing of equality.

Our manpower can match their machine-power, if we manifest ingenuity in gearing alternative energies and alternative engineering as well as utilizing high-technology in a decentralized way.

Ruralisation of industries to supplement agriculture, cottage-industries and cattle raising, should be our top priority. Self-reliant economy and local self government will convert the masses in the rural sector into a responsible people capable of self-rule as well as of creating a decent, peaceful, prosperous standard of living for themselves.

South Asia needs social revolutionaries for this sacred cause. Men of integrity and character are needed for carving out a different polity with a different style of living than that of the Occident.

The vast cultural heritage could be harnessed for the purpose of educating the youth. The revolutionary fervor should have the perfume of love and compassion rather than the stinking motivations of jealousy, hatred and bitterness.

Let us prove that peace is a way of life and that prosperity drenched in peace and compassion is the only way to build a world without violence and wars.

We in South Asia, are primarily agricultural countries. We have to develop rural industrialization and enable agriculture to become self-sustaining and evolve into a source of peace and prosperity for the rural population.

No industrialization in any parts of South Asia at the cost of agriculture and rural population should be tolerated at all. The national governments attracted towards international prestige and profit would like to convert every productive activity, including agriculture and village industries into a commodity for export. Debt and foreign exchange reserves are sophisticated excuses for these governments.

The day agriculture is used as an industry especially for export purposes, the relationship of the human mind to the land, to agriculture, to handicraft~ to fine arts would deteriorate into a utilitarian materialistic approach. There would be a cultural degradation and pauperization, when the relationship t the soil, to man-power, to handicrafts and fine arts i geared primarily to monetary concerns. We do want prosperity and reasonable material affluence, as quick!: as it is humanly possible but let us have the courage to reject the consumerist culture and its motivation which are deifying affluence, pleasure mongering and national gross products, as well as national profits.

The dignity of man, the decency in the activity of earning a livelihood and the warmth of personal relationships in such activities, cannot be sacrificed in the name of high technology, higher profits and highest place in the economic competitions around the world

Educational Revolution

Let us find out what is the Supreme Priority? Then priority number two, priority number three etc. Confusion among priorities is the soil for misery and suffering, violence and wars. The West may have material gains, sensual pleasures, collection of property as the supreme values. We in Asia, the people have heard the voice of the Great Buddha, the voice of the Great Prophet Mohammed, the voice of the ancient Indian Sages, who have proclaimed that the quality of life is much more important than the things you possess:

Life and Living has been the Supreme priority. And that priority has to Be Brought Back. We want material progress, we are not worshippers of starvation and poverty but we do not want it at the cost of humanness, at the cost of human dignity and the texture of human relationships, at the cost of peace, at the cost of fraternity and brotherhood among nations, among societies, among communities.

So my plea is for sorting out the priorities.

If peace is our priority, if cultural prosperity is our priority, if fraternity is our priority, then I think we will have to spell out the quality of life and living. The quality of the life, the quality of human beings - if that is the first priority; it can be brought about by education.

Today human beings can be bought and sold, not only women and children, but in the political market, from the basic rural unit to the highest unit of democratic institutions, men are bought and sold and they are willing to do that. You see, if there had been proper education, this political power or economic power would not tempt us to sell ourselves.

It is a mother's heart that is appealing to the people that a revolutionary approach to education will have to be explored. Alternative systems and structures of education will have to be explored and experimented with, otherwise the sicknesses - the mental sickness of corruption, of sycophancy, of auctioning human beings will not disappear. They will not disappear only through legislation; we have to educate our children and make them conscious that the physical bodies are their exterior and that there is some energy within them - whether you call it the Atman, the Chaitanya, the Soul- words do not matter.

The Sages of ancient days said that there is nothing higher or superior to a human being and a human life. So it seems to me that in the next few years, maybe we will have to take this up seriously. Education is for making the person aware of the existential essence of his being, of the essence of his life. In Swami Vivekananda's terms "It is for making the child aware of the Divinity within him and enabling the child to express that Divinity in human relationships."

Rural Industrial Revolution

Secondly, if we want to retain the culture, the sustainable economic development will have to be based on agriculture. We had a culture, a civilization based on agriculture - Krishi and Rishi culture - the whole culture was based upon that. Fortunately, even at the end of the twentieth Century, we have villages - those primary units of society. They are not destroyed as yet, as they have been destroyed in Western countries.

The Western Countries have lost the compact societies, the small communities, the face-to-face communities and also their related industries like the cottage industries, the village industries, cattle raising. The communities lived like a family. So it seems to me that the Culture has to be preserved and we have to take science and technology to the village, to the cottage, to the cattle shed, to the school.

How do we free ourselves from the clutches of institutions and organizations like World Bank, International Monetary Fund, from taking loans, begging for loans from all the countries?

Can we explore a man-based industrial development, economic development and not money based industrial development?

Making and organizing deficit budget, increasing the national debt - this has been the fashion and the mode of operation for the government's that be.

Can we, through the political parties or the non political social activities create a consciousness that we must set ourselves free from the clutches of institution like I.M.F and World Bank and the different States an their loans.

One is not opposed to the new slogans: "Globalisation" or "Liberalisation of Economy" or "Open Market Economy". One is not opposed to that, but not at the cost of domestic population. It is for the people from below to decide what kind of technology and what kind of help they want from multinationals.

Without economic independence my friends, political independence has only cosmetic value. So, have still to fight. If our forefathers, who have go before us brought us the political independence, let create an economic independence. Let us create Satyagraha - a peaceful democratic fight to take the economic independence unto the last person - the do' trodden, the lowliest of the low.

Unless that person has an honorable way of living, unless he has clothing, shelter, the means for health and education, celebrating the Golden Jubilee becomes only a mockery of Democracy.

The Way To Peace and Prosperity

Dear Young Friends, Youth is the architect of the Twenty-First Century. You have to explore all the horizons. You have to grow into cosmic awareness and planetary consciousness. You have to employ a new dynamics in human relationships so that the global human race can live together without mutual exploitation.

May the youth of South Asian countries meet and learn to share life.

Let them understand the pluralistic society in this region.

Let them find out ways of economic and political cooperation in this region.

Let them exchange views and experiences, so that, we the developing countries can pool our intelligence, man-power and material resources together for the holistic development of South Asian Region.

Let them learn to develop people-to-people diplomacy and new global human culture. This is the way to Peace and Prosperity.

Thus Vimalaji shared her vision for a new man and a new society with the youth of South Asia, hoping they would bring in the new era of peace and harmony, which was surely coming, as she wrote in Dalhousie in 1999.

The soft footsteps in the heavens
Bring tidings of a new man.
Offer your greetings to the advent of a New Era

The East and the West
Are embracing each other with love.
Are savouring the beauty
Of spontaneous co-existence.

The footsteps in the heavens
Bring tidings of a New Man.
Offer your greetings
To the advent of a New Era

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Chapter Eight

A Living Flame of Ancient Indian Culture

The Light Deepens

Making clear that the last word of spirituality
is never written,
and that by delving deeply into ancient texts
with a new light of understanding,
insights for today and the future can be born.

Salutations!

Salutations to the ever new Truth.

Salutations to the Everlasting Truth.

Salutations to that Which is eternally pure.

Salutations to the past, present and future.

Salutations to Death, to the total ending.

Salutations to Him
Who wears the Cosmic Body.

Salutations to the unmanifest Truth,
Which is ever pure.

Salutations to that Truth
Which cleanses all the time.

Salutations to the Spirit of friendship
and to the Yoga of friendship.

Salutations to that which always joins
and never separates.

Salutations to Life, which is overflowing with
the nectar of pure beingness.

... Vimala

Chapter Nine

A Living Flame of Ancient Indian Culture

The Light Deepens

INTRODUCTION

Most of Vimalaji's life was spent in the midst of people, meeting people, addressing meetings, giving talks, giving interviews and traveling, but what Vimalaji would have liked the most was to live a quiet life and not do any traveling. Vimalaji tried to do just this, after leaving the Bhoodan Movement when she came to settle in Mount Abu, but her quiet living did not last for long. In no time friends and inquirers started coming to visit Vimalaji, and began organizing her talks and camps. Vimalaji tried to live a quiet life again in 1991.

Vimalaji decided to stop traveling in 1991 and hoped to wind up the phase of traveling and speaking completely. She *wound up the work in Europe, U.K., U.S.A. and South America in September 1991.*

Vimalaji wrote to Barbara Pennington in November 1991:

Since 1961 to 1991 life was very hectic and the body had to go through severe climatic changes, as well as long journeys by land or air. Now it will have an occasion to spend the remaining years without the ordeal of constant traveling. Vimalaji hopes to spend seven months in Mount Abu, four months at Dalhousie, and one month at Ahmedabad. The work will be done only from these three places. People desirous of organizing camps will come either to Abu or Dalhousie and organize them. Personal interviews and correspondence will be the main channel of communication and inter-action with the people of the planet.

Vimalaji had intentionally limited the time spent in silence to continue her service to humanity. Now that Vimalaji had fewer social commitments and responsibilities she went deep within. Certain poems Vimalaji wrote at the time suggest the state of consciousness that made traveling and talks difficult:

My Abode – The Absolute

Established am I in the absolute space
Where there is neither day nor night
Neither sun nor moon

That self resplendent realm
Is where I have made my Abode

Earth merges into water,
Water mingles with Fire
Fire merges with Air
The Air rests in the space
That is where I have made my abode

The Cosmos is condensed
In the soundless sound – the Pranav (OM)
That Pranav is condensed in the Bindu
In the very womb of that Bindu is the nothingness
That is where I have made my Abode

In the half mark of the Pranav
Is the sacred cave of Vimal
In the emptiness of that cave
Is where I have made my Abode

The unchanging Absolute space is free of vibrations
Emptiness is itself fullness
The fullness of that emptiness

Is where I have made my abode.

The Brahmi State

That state in which the mind is no more
That state which fascinates the world
That state in which the fear
of this world and beyond disappear forever
That state is called the 'Brahmi State'

The blissful, ever creative dimension of Turiya
Is ever young, is eternally wedded, is ever unified with death
That state is called the 'Brahmi State'

It is a spontaneous Samadhi
It is an eternal liberation beyond words
That state is called the 'Brahmi state'

An Ever New Land

Saw such a wondrous land
On the other side of the threshold of life and death
Where there is

Neither earth nor the sky
Neither the sun nor the moon
Neither the illusion of the five elements
Nor the shadow of the three gunas

Where truth and untruth have no entry
Where there is the mysterious meeting of the day and night
Where the eternity, containing nectar,
is glowing and glittering
Where the un-destroyable ISNESS is free of movement

Behold such an ever new land
Where the speech ends out of humility
The mind melts into the light of Intelligence
The illusion of Atma – Param Atma being different
Is shattered
And the light of Vimal's love spreads.

After Vimalaji stopped extensive traveling, Vimalaji spent time in Mount Abu, Dalhousie and Madhavpur a village on the sea coast of Gujarat near Porbandar. Vimalaji would spend the summer months in Dalhousie, the winter months in Madhavpur, and the rest of the year would be spent at Mount Abu.

There was an Ashram founded by Swami Ramdularai at Madhavpur. The members of the Ashram requested Vimalaji to spend the winters there and built a small cottage for her adjacent to the main Ashram. The time spent at Madhavpur was one of relaxation and hard work. Many enquirers and social activist groups from Gujarat would come to meet Vimalaji there; it being closer for them than Mount Abu, and the Ashram was able to provide them with boarding and lodging. Here Vimalaji did not have to look into any of the daily routine of household management, as the Ashram friends gladly took over those responsibilities.

Himalayan Retreat

In the summer months Vimalaji used to go to the Himalayas. There is one love in Vimalaji's life and that is the Himalayas and now that she had more leisure time, she hoped to stay for longer periods in the midst of her beloved Himalayas.

Unlike Vimalaji's residence at Mount Abu which was chosen for her, Vimalaji's retreat in the Himalayas was chosen by Vimalaji herself. Before settling down in Dalhousie, Vimalaji and friends visited many of the hill stations in the Himalayas, but it was Dalhousie that Vimalaji chose to make her Himalayan retreat. The house was seen and bought by Kalyanbhai and other friends, who later donated it to Jeevan Yoga Foundation. It was then called Sudarshan Kothi but Vimalaji named it "Shivkul" (the family of Lord Shiva). The house in Mount Abu was called "Shivkuti" (the abode of Lord Shiva).

When Vimalaji first came to stay at Dalhousie, she climbed every mountain and hilltop and explored all the walks, walking or trekking every where. There is a place a few miles away from Dalhousie called Khajjiar which Vimalaji made a point to visit; she liked to spend at least three days and nights there, staying at the Forest Guest House. Khajjiar has a small lake in front of a Devi temple and beautiful walks in the pine woods. Abhinv Gupta is said to have written books on Kashmiri Shaivism there, which are hidden in caves.

Shivkul is located on Thandi Sadak which means the cold street. There is another street in Dalhousie called Garam Sadak or warm street. Many friends advised Vimalaji to buy a house on the warmer side of the mountain, but as one can't see the Himalayan snow-capped mountains from that side, Vimalaji opted for the Thandi Sadak though it meant being faced with icy cold winds and heavy snowfall in the autumn and winter months.

In Shivkul, Vimalaji's room is on the top floor overlooking the mountains. Vimalaji on getting up in the morning sits out in the verandah in meditation. Her writing desk is there, so throughout the day she is on the verandah in the proximity of the mountains. In the night, if there was a storm, Vimalaji would spend hours on the verandah watching the lightening and listening to the thunder. When the day is nice and sunny you might find Vimalaji napping after lunch under the pine trees on the grounds. There are many poems Vimalaji has written in praise of the Himalayas and many Rishis and Yogis have come and given her Darshan there or had dialogues with her.

Vimalaji wrote in 1993:

Prostrations to the Holy Himalayas

There is Life in me
It is woven in every particle of my Being
And I am woven into Life
In all ways – in all places – in all times
This Vimal manifestation is fragrant with the perfume
Of the unseen, unnamable Truth

Every night one learns to embrace Death
Every dawn one experiences the joy of being born anew
Throughout the day, relationship bestows the gift of freedom
And actions shower the benediction of total renunciation

The sight of the Himalayas – the King of all mountains
Is synonymous with Atma Darshan or Self realization
The holy, Godly, steadfast Himalayan mountains
enrich ones mind with the incessant flow of tranquility.

The Lord of the mountains washes out

the dirt gathered on one's body, mind and breath
Just by one sight of the heavenly mountain
the Divine energy abiding in every particle of one's Being
gets activated and begins to flow

The proximity of the Lord of the mountains
gives new life to the ancient commandments
and the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads.
The deep and mysterious silence of the Holy Himalayas
makes eloquent once again the ancient culture of the Rishis

I humbly prostrate to Thee, a hundred times
O Himalayas, the pride of the earth
I humbly bow down to Thee, a hundred times
O father of numerous rivers of Bharat
I humbly bow down repeatedly
To the unparalleled richness of Bharat

Every particle of this body
is anxious to get mingled into the Himalayas
The earthly being wants to be enveloped by
and dissolved into the Divine unmanifested Isness
The inhaling and exhaling of the breath

longs to come to a standstill
The wave is waiting to merge and disappear into the ocean.

When Vimalaji was in the Himalayas she would make it a point especially in the rainy season to spend some time in complete silence. She would not talk or meet with people then. The time spent in the midst of the sacred Himalayas was an opportunity for going deep into silence.

Eloquent Silence

Where are all the words lost?
Has sound gone to sleep?
Eloquent silence is humming its song
The earth and the skies are resounding it
In the cave of vibrating Divinity
My mind and mind are trembling in the bliss
Perhaps Divinity wants to use it
As an instrument for Its expression

Communing with the Rishis

During the visits to Dalhousie, Vimalaji would keep aside time for discourses to European enquirers on Upanishads and Yoga Sutras. Most of the Europeans who attended the classes were Yoga teachers and students.

In the last half of the twentieth century, there has been a great interest, throughout the globe in Indian philosophy, spirituality and Yoga. Numerous teachers from India have been visiting the Western countries bringing with them their understanding of the ancient wisdom, and so at times much confusion has resulted in the minds of the listeners. So many different schools of thought, so many different approaches, so many varied path, what to choose from, what to keep, what to discard? How to discriminate between the essence and the inessentials?

It was in this milieu that Vimalaji was travelling around the globe, giving talks on the urgency of transformation and mutation of mind. In 1989, in one of her Camps in Villa Era, Italy, a group of Yoga Teachers from the Italian Yoga Federation attended, and asked Vimalaji to give them separate time and answer some of their questions on Yoga. Vimalaji agreed. They appreciated very much Vimalaji's approach to the ancient truths and wanted to have more time to study with her. So began the discourses and study classes on the Upanishads, Gita and Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.

The Yoga students and teachers would come from Europe and stay in Abu or Dalhousie for the duration of the classes. Vimalaji spoke on the Ishavasya Upanishad, the Chandogya Upanishad, Katha Upanishad, Kena Upanishad, twelve chapters of the Bhagavad-Gita, on Patanjali Yoga Sutras, on Buddhism and Jainism and also on Science and Spirituality.

Vimalaji brings alive the ancient truths relating them to the challenges of daily living. She explains very briefly, the background in which these teachings were given, so that they can be understood in their proper perspective, and not be mistaken as talks. Vimalaji also expresses her gratitude to her students for the opportunity to communicate with the ancient Rishis.

These are classes where a teacher is teaching, not a camp where you give lectures. They are much more direct, much more informal and intimate, where I don't spare my students at all. With all the compassion in the heart I become merciless with them, and make them work hard.

I express my joy and also thankfulness to all of you who came here and gave me the opportunity of being with the Rishis, sometimes with Sanat Kumara and Narada, sometimes with Aruni and Shvetaketu, sometimes with Prajapati and Vbirocana and so on. You gave me the opportunity to spend the time with them, so I am very, very thankful to all of you, *Vimalaji describes her relationship to the Rishis in the following poems:*

Vimal's Clan

I, named Vimal
Am the daughter of the Rishi clan
Born of Kashyap lineage,
I offer this mighty chant of conquering death
For the protection of India
We are the sons and daughters of the Sages
We shall save India
We are the sons and daughters of the Sages
We will redeem the culture of the Sages

The Avadhoot

We live in that secret place
where there is neither friend nor companion
Our way of living is that of an Avadhoot

It does not matter that we reside in the mind and body
Though living in the body we are beyond the body

Everyone sees the skin and bones
But none has the courage to perceive the real being
In spite of hearing the sound of the words
None grasps the real true meaning

The classes were held in the Shivkul Meditation Room, which is a semi-circular room attached to the main house. The whole northern side of the room has glass windows so there is an unobstructed view of the Himalayas. The sessions would begin with thirty minutes of silence and were followed by the discourse. The evening session also began with a silence session followed by a discourse or question and answer session.

Vimalaji was not satisfied with the English translations of ancient Vedic texts, and so left them aside to give her own translation of the mantras.

When I referred to the commentaries I was not satisfied with a single one. I did not feel that any of those commentaries did justice to the mantras, so I kept them aside, and started communion with each mantra. In a non-authoritarian, way I went into the mantras and shared with you. It is quite a responsibility. These talks are emergences, something has emerged, they were not prepared.

I am very careful and watchful, that Vimalaji does not impose something that the Upanishad did not say, and I had to be extremely careful to see what the word yields and can yield. It is quite a boldness to move away from the traditional interpretations, of last 1,500 years. To move away from all this, to put it aside, and communicate something, on one's own.

I'm sharing these things for the first time in my life. For instance, I have not ever communicated on the theme of "Yoga beyond Meditation." "Yoga beyond the Ashtanga Yoga" That is an adventure, and I am embarking upon this adventure because I can count upon your cooperation. This is not the way that the traditional commentaries of Yoga Sutras deal with Yoga Sutras. It is something that one has not dared to communicate up to now, though it was there within oneself, and one finds that it would be dangerous if it is not shared now, when it is already late.

You see, to brush aside the commentaries, as I had done about Katha Upanishad, Kena Upanishad, and Ishavasya, to brush aside all the commentaries and to look afresh at the Upanishads or Patanjali and his communication, is quite an adventure.

To put the ancient wisdom in a language that a modern human being can understand is quite an ordeal. The Sanskrit language that is used in the Vedas is not the language that is used today. The Vedic Sanskrit used to be called Arsha Sanskrit. 'Arsha' from the word 'Rishi', that is

Sanskrit that was used by the Rishis. It was quite a different language by itself.

New View Of Ancient Questions

We are focusing on how the Vedas, the Upanishads in general, look upon the problem which the human race has been confronted since millions of years, namely: What is Creation? What is the universe that we see around us? What is the source of Creation? How is the source of creation related to the manifested nature of creation? What is man, the human race doing here? What is the role of the human race, the human being in relation to the source and the creation – both? How does a human being relate to the manifest world, the cosmos and the unmanifest source of creation, which they call God, the Divine?

One wonders why the human race has converted living into such a big ordeal. In the neurotic society that we have created we have to find out an alternative way of living, so that we are living cells of love, joy and peace wherever we move. The dimension of Yoga as a movement of relationship full of harmony, peace and joy has to be manifested. The dimension of Yoga as spontaneous attention has to be manifested in the movement of relationship, wherever we go.

Life is sacred, Life is holy and our job is to learn to live, using all that is created for us. Life is holy, Life is sacred and the act of living is an offering, worship to the sacredness of Life

So we take a pilgrimage together with the Rishis of the Upanishads, into the forests of ancient India, and the journey back thousand of years, putting ourselves in the position of the Rishi and the students.

You have come to a country that is very ancient and when you enter into this room, in which you will be spending a few hours every day, you will be with a person that is of course born an Indian, is Indian in culture, but global in citizenship, and cosmic in consciousness. When you enter the room you are with me in the ancient India. And I would love to introduce you to that ancient heritage, that spiritual heritage of India.

Exploring The Vedas & Upanishads

Let us begin with the Vedas. The four of them - the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda the Atharva Veda. They are perhaps the first written words in the human literature, the most ancient books, the most ancient written word.

They are marvellous expressions of human genius. They are poetic expressions of personal perception of reality, personal experience of that reality on the psycho-physical level. They are also narrations of the transformation that took place in the life of those who psycho-physically experienced the reality. The Vedas are not a philosophy; they are not a system of thought.

Perhaps they were written by different Rishis, different Sages, and different Seers. They are poetic expressions of personal perception and experiences. Naturally the experiences are the result of communion with nature, with energies combined and concealed in nature. And this communion takes place at different levels of consciousness, but they do not try to reduce these experiences to a crystallised system of philosophy or thought, that was done later on when we come to the six schools of Indian philosophy like Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamasa and Vedanta. That is a later product.

In the Vedas we can find, broadly speaking two sections: One the expression of personal experience and the other how to correlate and coordinate that perception and that experience, with daily living in relationships.

We are coming now to the Upanishad, the end of the Vedas, the last phase of Vedic expression. Historically also it was the end of the Vedic period.

The Upanishad is the understanding resulting from the communion of the teacher and the students sitting together discussing fundamental issues of Life. Students were not expected to touch books, they were not expected to write notes because then you are transferring your understanding to paper. Understanding is within you as a substance of the being, but once you write it down, you have put the responsibility of memorising it, to the paper or cassette. So the sensitivity to contain the understanding in you goes on decreasing.

In the ancient days, it was education through the living word, education through transmission. With the living word, comes the breath of your life, with the living word, is the transmission of energy behind the words, the life behind the words.

The emphasis was not on teaching, the emphasis was on helping to learn, and learning never came to an end with the Seers, the Rishis and it never came to an end with the students.

In Ishavasya Upanishad, the sages, the Rishis, tried to verbalise the principle of truth that is immanent and transcendent, all permeating, all pervading and yet transcending. Ishavasya has helped us to see how all our actions are instrumental in the revelation of that truth. Unless the actions become the means of discovering the truth, the vidya, they may lead us towards darkness.

Chandogya Upanishad deals with the primal principle of creation which is sound. The Rishis helped us to see how Pranav, Omkar, the sound that is not born of friction, is a self generated, homogeneous sound, which explodes into millions of universes. So from the principle, the immanent and transcendent principle, we proceeded towards the primal source of creation, the sound, the Omkar, the Udgita and so on.

Relevance Of Ancient Teachings

Vimalaji shows how the teachings of the Upanishads (Chandogya Upanishad) may be correlated to the modern psychological findings and research.

So what is ego then? It is a wrong identification of the sense of self-ness with the finite, with the sensory, with the psychological, just a wrong identification. In the last few years when Vimala visits Europe or America, she says Ego is a psychological myth. Now the time has come in the world for the explosion of the psychological myth. It is a psychological superstition and in the language of the science of Yoga it is a wrong identification. Every mantra of the Chandogya has a bearing upon the Yoga sutras.

So the term ego, the name ego, the idea of an ego is the result of mistaken identification, wrong identification. It has no factual content, it is a feeling you go on feeling, because you have been trained to say you are the body, you are the mind.

Vimalaji describes the dissolution of the ego in a poem written in 1991:

Losing the Ego

The mai-khana of the ego has been robbed,

The structure of 'me-ness' has collapsed
The roof of 'my-ness' has blown away
The foundation of knowledge has been broken
The walls of principles have shattered
The ideals of ideology have fallen apart
The whole of 'me' is looted.

In all the multiplicity of possessions
Was the feeling of 'My-ness'
Was the abode of 'Me-ness'
In the looting away of all that was 'Mine'
Has been the death of the 'Me'.

Now who shall make claim to immortality?
Now who shall raise the pretense of 'Being-ness'?

The mai-khana has been robbed
Gone are the stores of all intoxicants
I myself am lost
There is nothing left to remain as remnants –
Thus What now is, is NOTHING.

Dissolution of Vimal

At the benediction of self-realization
The mental modifications are paralyzed
The very foundation of illusion is sunk at its roots

The form of the formless is contained in the eyes
The name of the nameless colors the lips

The dissolution of Vimal
Brightens the state beyond the mind
The state of Brahman uncovered
There is unbroken Samadhi

Personal Research

The health of speech is described by the Rishis. I had not before used the term "health of speech". I learnt it this morning, when I spent some time with the Rishis. I spend practically an hour and a half with the Rishis every morning between three and four thirty, sometimes three thirty to five, just to be with them, in order to feel the spirit behind their words. It is quite a responsibility to bring to the twentieth century what was conceived and pronounced thousands of years back. You have to travel back thousands of years and see it in its original form, feel it in its original environment and then bring it over with the help of your body and speech, it is a marvelous thing.

You are conducting a research when you want to find out how to focus your energies and be with the atman, the supreme intelligence. Gathering energies, focusing them on the inward reality, and then being with the reality, living in it and out of it. This is research.

Spirituality is a kind of first-hand personal research; it is not acceptance, it is an experiment. All the theory or the theoretical aspect is completely useless, unless it is accompanied by personal experimentation in daily living, in relation to yourself, in relation to other human beings, in relation to the cosmic objects outside of you.

Ancient Teachings Come Alive

Bhagavad-Gita

Vimalaji writes and talks about Lord Krishna and His Teachings in the Bhagavad-Gita. The classes on Gita were held in 1992 and 1993.

As you know Gita is the essence of the Vedas. It is elucidation of the teachings of the Vedas. *Brahma-Vidyayam Yoga Shastra Shri Krishna-Arjuna Samavade* --- that is how every chapter goes. It is about the science of Yoga rooted in Brahma Vidya, giving us briefly the teachings of Vedas --- that is the claim of Bhagavad-Gita.Gita is a textbook of Yoga and a guide to the pathless path of Reality. It is the path by which a human unites with the Infinite Beingness. Gita deals with the undivided whole though it points out and even elaborates upon the outer systems like Sankhya Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Karma Yoga or Bhakti Yoga.

Gita deals with the holistic path, right from the beginning to the end. The sequence of the chapters is of great significance. The path is not the property of Hinduism or of any other religion. It can exist apart from any formal religion and that is why it can be helpful to enquirers of Truth all over the world.

Yoga is to be undertaken for the revelation of Truth and for nothing else. If one indulges in other motivations, it is a mistake which can result in neurosis or worse.

The path is neither Eastern nor Western, it belong to no race, no religion. We can look upon Krishna as a person, and as an exponent of non-personal Reality. Those who look upon the person as an Avatar, create an exclusive cult of worship of the person. For example the Vaishnavas, Gaudiyas, Hari Krishna Movement, Krishna Consciousness Movement, , look to chapter ten and eleven of the Gita as the sacred words, the ultimate sanction. Those who look upon Gita as an exposition of the essence of the Vedas look upon Krishna as an exponent of Impersonal Transcendent Reality, immanent in every expression of life. One can choose either of the approaches. All systems are partial and hence limited. The inner path is holistic. The outer systems can at best be its aspects. Shri Krishna says: "It is not possible to know the nature and character of the Transcendental Divinity with the help of discriminative reason. All such efforts have failed. I am unborn and undying because I am the essence reflected in every form. The forms are born and they die, but the essence of the Divine energy does not perish. It merges back into the emptiness of Akasha

Words of Enlightened Ones refer to Eternal Truths. They do not belong to any particular time or century. Indian psyche is heavily loaded with verbal information about religion, philosophy, metaphysical theories and spiritual terminology.

Patanjali's Raja Yoga

Vimalaji gave talks on Raja Yoga in 1989 in Italy and again in 1996 in Dalhousie. Before Vimalaji commenced on the discourses, Vimalaji would make one point very clear, that what was being said was about Patanjali's Yoga:

Vimala is not sitting here to talk about her understanding of life. I am sitting here as a teacher would sit in a class, to talk about Raja Yoga, which is a philosophy of Patanjali. With great respect, I share my understanding of those aphorisms.

Yoga as a way of living was discovered in India thousands and thousands of years ago. It is not a philosophy or a science that came into existence by itself in 553 B.C. when Patanjali codified the way of living into certain sutras. The study of the sutras, the words, their literal meaning is an introduction to Yoga by themselves, but the aphorisms or the sutras of Patanjali do not constitute the whole of Yoga. In order to understand Patanjali, we will have to go back into the Vedic history or rather the history of Vedic culture in India.

The word 'Yoga" indicates a science and the art of blending that which has been separated, that which has been individuated. That which has been separated is helped to come back, to join together and blend into the indivisible non-fragmentable wholeness. The science of Yoga itself flowered into many branches. So those who studied sound metaphysics, they brought forth Mantra Yoga. Those who studied the energies and energy centres in the human body with special emphasis on sex energy, they developed Tantra Yoga. Those who studied the art of merging energies they developed Laya Yoga. Those who concentrated on the fire principle and the breath in the body they developed Hatha Yoga. Those who specialised in using action as the way of going back to the root of life, they developed Karma Yoga. Those who used devotion as a path of getting back to the root of Life they developed Bhakti Yoga. The science of Yoga flowered into so many branches but you come to the main tree and that is Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga is not a specialisation in one direction. In its compass it takes the whole life. You also have Integral Yoga as Shri Aurobindo used to say, the speaker has been using the term "Jeevan Yoga" for the yoga of life.

First thing that the science of Yoga tells us is that there is nothing inanimate in Life. Through experiments on their body and investigations they arrived at the basic Truth that we have to learn and incorporate in our way of living, that the whole cosmos is an organism. The planet earth is a living organism, vibrating with Life. Life permeates every body, everything. Do not call the earth a thing, do not call a tree, a mountain or river a thing, they are Beings. You know the whole cosmos is a living organism and it has parts, like the human body has parts.

The three discoveries of the Vedic and Upanishadic period, upon which the science of Raja Yoga is based, are: there is an organic wholeness of life, there is an inter-relatedness of every being, of every expression of Life, and there is an intelligent harmony permeating the whole cosmos.

Patanjali says that while making effort, while training, studying, become aware that there is a principle permeating everything. The feel of the presence of Divinity, of the presence of Intelligence gets converted into awareness. To it have an attitude of surrender; otherwise you might mistake yourself as the master of your body, and master of the cosmos or the universe

Very many of the aphorisms of Patanjali's Raja Yoga Vimalaji explains in a very different way, giving much clarification on the ancient Sanskrit and interpretations of the words. In order to help the students of Yoga understand the sutras, Vimalaji went into the very root of the Sanskrit words and gave some very rare in-depth meanings to the words, *helping to put right the inaccurate translations of some of the Sanskrit terminology used. We give a few examples.*

Pancha Kleshas

What is Klesha? How do you translate that in English language? Do you translate it as pain, as hurt or as suffering? The word for pain and hurt in Sanskrit is *Dukham.* *Kleshah* would be translated into English language by the word suffering. So *Kleshah* is suffering. Please let us not translate *Kleshah* by the words pain or hurt, otherwise it will be an inaccurate translation. According to Patanjali the five *Kleshahs* are: Avidya – Smita – Raga – Dvesh - Abhiniveshah kleshah .

A-vidya. Vidya is self knowledge that is the meaning of the Sanskrit word in the period of Patanjali and not just Knowledge. So in here in Patanjali's Yoga or in Ishavasya Upanishad the word Avidya refers to ignorance about one's own nature, one's own essence. Patanjali says when this basic ignorance about the essence of one's being is eliminated and that is Vidya or self knowing, then the suffering called Avidya gets eliminated.

The next is *Asmita* the word is translated generally as egoism, but Asmita is identification with the conceptual structure and so it becomes the cause of suffering.

Raga is the desire for repetition of pleasure which results in attachment and attachment is another source of suffering. *Dvesha* is aversion, the desire to run away, to avoid.

Abhiniveshah – Let me see how to approach this Abhiniveshah. Aggressive inclination to cling to the body. I am studying with you, looking at what Patanjali had said. Abhiniveshah is a kind of suffering which is the result of this inhibition of obsession with the body,

Vimalaji clarified the meaning of another group of sutras dealing with Yamah.

Ahimsa – Satya – Asteya – Brahmacharya – Aparigraha yamah. *Yamahs* do not give you a code of conduct, they give you a perspective of life, an evaluation of life, they give you an attitude towards life. I hope you see the difference. So please do not look upon the Yamahs as giving you a rigid code of conduct.

Ahimsa - When you are dedicated to the awareness of the wholeness of Life, to the inter relatedness of everything that you see in the life naturally your life becomes a dedication of ahimsa or non killing, non valence

Satya - Truthfulness means we are dedicated to the Truth we perceive, to the Truth we understanding so when Ahimsa is an intelligence harmonious relationship.

Asteya - is translated in English commentaries as non stealing. What does that mean? Just to call it non stealing, not being a thief would be a very cheap rendering of something very precious communicated by Patanjali. To accept things of personal use for which you have not worked – physically, mentally, intellectually To go on accepting things like unearned income, life securities, unemployment doles, that are given by governments and for which you have not worked . To have the austerity not to have an inclination, wish or expectation – verbalised or unverbalised to get anything for which one has not worked. Do you see the importance of the quality of consciousness which would feel it below its dignity to receive anything, to accept anything for which one has not worked? Do you see the important of this Yamah when we the modern human being and our societies, are suffering the cancerous disease of corruption. What is corruption but to take money for which you don't work?

Brahmacharya

Brahmacharya is a word that has been treated with utter cruelty, distortion, twisting. I don't know. God only knows what made the human beings identify it and equate it with physical celibacy. Brahma – the ultimate Reality, *Brahmane – charaiveti-charaiveti-iti-brahmachari* – one who lives in that ultimate reality, one who lives in the awareness of that non duality of life, one who lives in the awareness of the unity of life is a Brahmacharin. Non duality is the reality, is the ultimate reality. Life is a homogeneous wholeness, it is indivisible, it is non fragmentable.

One, whose every movement is born of the awareness of the ultimate reality within him and without him, is a Brahmacharin, living in the awareness of advaita.

Brahmacharya is dedication to the understanding of Divinity. Understanding takes place only when you have perceived something, seen something. Brahmacharya implies perception of Divinity, understanding of the nature of Divinity and living the awareness of divinity. It is a triple dedication to the perception, to the understanding, and to the awareness. That is not my interpretation; I am just giving to you the literal meaning of the word Brahmacharya. That is why it is included in one of Yamahs of Ashtanga Yoga.

The word Brahmacharya has been narrowed down to mean celibacy. The meaning of the word got limited to celibacy, countenance, refraining from sex life. But this is an interpretation imposed upon the word Brahmacharya by commentators that you have come across in India for the last thousands of years. And when the books of Indian philosophy got translated into English or French or German languages the word Brahmacharya was translated as celibacy. Celibacy is a very limited thing.

Dedication to the awareness of Divinity, dedication to the understanding of Divinity can be possible even in a married life. Married life or sexual relationship, if it is not distorted, if it is not compulsive sex, obsessive sexuality, if it is a normal, sane, healthy part of human life, then marriage is not an obstacle, it cannot be an obstacle to the dedication to the truth of life. This is how Vimala sees it. I am not referring to the commentators of Upanishads, of Yoga Sutras. In many of the Indian languages they will insist upon Brahmacharya as not being married, refraining from sex relationship. For me that is not only a secondary thing, unessential thing, but I think it is rather incorrect interpretation, imposed upon that sacred word *Brahmacharya.*

Aparigraha – Aparigraha has been translated by the commentators as non possession. Now you have to possess things, you have to have a house, a room to live in, food and clothing . Patanjali would not be stupid enough to say you should not possess anything and go around in a loin cloth, that was not the meaning. You have to acquire the essentials but after acquisition you also begin to own the things and possess them. Possessiveness has exclusiveness; there is an attachment. You acquire for utility, to acquire and to use without attachment and exclusiveness, is a sane way of living, but without beginning to enjoy possessing possessions, just for the sake of possessing.

Ahimasa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aprigrahah Yamah these are the absolute values of human life. It is not a code of conduct. Unless there are some absolute values which cannot be bargained and the consciousness is rooted in those values, it seems to me that sane and healthy societies cannot come into existence.

Patanjali is talking about a new content of the consciousness when he talks about the Yamahs, which are universal values of life, applicable to all the human being irrespective of their regional, cultural, language differences.

Vimalaji explains how she hopes that now, with the continued interest of `the occidental enquirers in Yoga and meditation, they will go one step beyond Hatha Yoga to the dimension of Dhyan and Samadhi .

The Oriental parts of the world have had Yogis in the ancient days, now the Occidental world, which is equipped with science, technology, and with sufficient knowledge and interest in Yoga, could produce Yogis or demonstrations of transformation in the content of consciousness. It seems to be the turn of the Occidental hemisphere.

Since a couple of centuries the Westerners were interested in the study of Vedas and Upanishads, they have translated them into German, French, English, and you have also commentaries written on them. In the last twenty five years, the West has started taking interest in Yoga.

A person like me feels hopeful that sincere and serious minded students of Yoga would take Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyan, and Samadhi – the second part of Ashtanga Yoga seriously. I hope that they won't stop at the first half - at the first four steps - but take seriously the second part and allow that mutation in the psyche to take place in their lives. It was this hope that made me give consent to the suggestion that I spend some days with Yoga teachers. I was anxious to have participants in the camp who have studied at least the theoretical part of Raja Yoga, and have taught Hatha Yoga for five to ten years, so we could go deeper, not talk about the elementary, preliminary parts of the science of Yoga, but explore and go as deep as it is possible to go with the help of words.

Guru

Another often misunderstood and misinterpreted Sanskrit word is "Guru", here too Vimalaji gives us a novel way of looking at the word, which she considers as a code word.

The word *Guru* is a code word. It implies a state of being, in which the conceptual dimension of thought and knowledge is transcended. A Guru is a person who has allowed dimensional transformation to occur in his life; in whom the I consciousness operates only at the physical level, for verbal communication. In whom the words 'I' and 'Me' have no psychological meaning or relevance - there is no identification with those concepts. Non personal intelligence, which has nothing to do with biological or psychological inheritance, is the operative energy. It sees, hears, and responds. Activisation of that energy is the by-product of meditation.

Such a person can be called Guru or Master. He is a living proof that transcendence of thought structure or dying to the ego is possible. He lives in an entirely different way than the conventional way. His relationships are based on the awareness of unity or wholeness of life .There is no tension of duality. The awareness of non dual, organic wholeness is the content of Love. The duality or manyness of manifest Life, is the field in which Love and compassion can live and function. No fear, no assertion, spontaneity is the breath of Love

When a student or a person is consumed by the urge to discover the meaning of life, when there is the urge to dedicate one's life completely to that exploration, that person gets charged with the energy of genuine enquiry .

On the other hand, a person living in the dimension of master-ness or Guru-ness gets charged with the energy of love and compassion; such energies are brought together by life. Life regulates their movement, in such a way that the meeting takes place, without the conscious effort of either of them

A Guru cannot be sought. You cannot hunt for a master. To become a disciple or a genuine enquirer and learner is sufficient to cause the event. Searching for a Master with the help of conditioned mind is a futile exercise. You may come across experts in Tantra, Mantra, Nada or Laya Yoga, you may come across persons who have acquired and cultivated occult powers or siddhis, and may even benefit by those powers. But that is not a Guru-Shishya relationship.

You may be attracted or infatuated by a powerful personality, his oratory or beauty of the verbal presentation. One has to discriminate psychological requirements from spiritual aspirations. The former seeks protection, the latter freedom

Let the enquiry ripen, let fearlessness prevail, let there be the willingness to offer psycho-physical life at the altar of exploration, and then the Meeting with a master is bound to happen. It is the field of happening and not doing. It is the field of humility or surrender of the ego, the sacred effortlessness of meditation.

On a Guru Poornima day (The day celebrated in India as the Guru's day, falling each year on the full moon in July) Vimalaji wrote about Guru (teacher) and Shishya (student)

Guru = An individual who can stimulate enquirers to go beyond the centre of the I – the ME. An individual who can induce the transcendence in the consciousness of the enquirer.

Shishya = An enquirer who is dedicated to the transcendence of the ego. An enquirer who is capable of unconditional trust in the Guru, once he is recognized as such.

Guru and Shishya = Companionship on the vertical voyage of all consciousness; absolute awareness.

Guru is the senior and Shishya is the junior. Both have the same motivation; the same direction; the same attitudes and inclinations

Guru Seva = The real service is to shed ignorance, attachments and sensual involvement in the world. Renunciation of all psychological involvements is Sannyas. To be free, is the real service to the Guru. There can be no companionship if one lives in the light of Awareness and the other lives in the darkness of the ME. Companionship is the real service to the Guru.

Non-Duality

I think that the fundamental difference between the Asiatic and European civilization, culture and philosophy, lies in the difference of perceptions as to the relation between the manifest and the unmanifest. The cosmos is the manifest and the Supreme Intelligence contained in the ground of existence, in the absolute space, in the emptiness of the space, is the unmanifest. What is the nature of the relation? Is the Cosmos the effect? Is the emptiness the cause of Creation? Do the properties of the source, of the emptiness, of the supreme intelligence change, when the unmanifest magnifies itself into the manifest?

The Chandogya Upanishad as well as all the other Upanishads – altogether there are one hundred and eight – all the Upanishads together, without exception, have only one message or teaching for the race, that the properties of the source do not change. When the Source magnifies itself, manifests itself as the cosmos, it remains intact.

Cause becomes effect and requires some process of becoming. It is a kind of relationship of sequence in time, conditioned by technique or method or process. But the marvellous and perhaps mysterious fact about Life is that the source is the essence simultaneously. Between the unmanifest and manifest there is no technique, no process. The Source does not become the essence, the unmanifest does not become the manifest, the unmanifest "magnifies" Itself, if at all one may use the term. There is simultaneity.

It is a relation of simultaneity between the source of cosmos and the cosmos itself, which leads to the philosophy of Vedanta: Non-duality in the midst of duality, non-duality as the substance of duality, the philosophy of unity in the midst of diversity. The under current in all the manifestations, is this oneness – the source-ness, or essence-ness of Reality.

You have to dedicate your energies not only to the Brahman in an abstract way, not only to the Source of creation theoretically, but you have to see the Brahman in the Sarvam (all). You have to see the one in many, with the help of many-ness.

The manifest is the only door through which you reach the unmanifest. The innumerable varieties are the innumerable avenues of duality, through which you enter non-duality of Life.

Thus non-duality or Vedanta does not remain a theory, does not remain an idea, but it become the substance of your being. It also becomes a fact of life, to be experienced when you inter-act with the many-ness of the manifest world.

This is the extraordinary approach of the Asiatic Rishis – their discovery of the simultaneity of unmanifest and manifest, the thread of oneness woven into the texture of many-ness. And I do not know if I can do justice to it, but this is the foundation of Vedanta.

Shankaracharya after studying the Upanishads wrote commentaries, and he expounded, he verbalised this marvellous perspective of life for the modern world. Had Shankaracharya not been there, perhaps the secrets of the Upanishads would have remained covered up by the music and poetry.

Truth In Various Traditions

Teachings of Lord Buddha

Vimalaji spoke about Lord Buddha's Teachings to a group of Buddhist enquirers from Sri Lanka and clarified Buddhist terminology.

This is the first time in my life that I will be having an intimate encounter with the students of Dharma - the Buddhist Dhamma. I cannot claim that I have studied the whole Buddhist philosophy of what you call Dhamma, the teachings of Buddha as thoroughly or a deeply as I have done the Vedas or the Upanishads.

It is a great joy to me to be talking to the children of Buddha, to be talking about Dhamma, it is the first time in my life that I have the privilege to talk about Buddha, His teachings, and His communications I am neither a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Christian, there is something-ness and somebody-ness to the body, but inside there is nothingness, inside there is nobody-ness

First of all, we have to find out if this choiceless decision for the path of nirvana is there, or is not there. If it is there, then the learning begins; without that determination, without that sankalpa, a very sacred decision, as the ancient people would call it, the learning does not begin. The moment you have taken the decision you have changed.

Buddha has shown the path of Vimukti. Vimukti – total freedom from raga – dwesha or attraction and repulsion towards the phenomenal world, towards the illusion of 'I' even. And when all the attraction and identification with the phenomenal world and the non-existent identity with the ego comes to an end, there is that indescribable, majestic state of nirvana here and now.

Bhikshu is a person in whose consciousness, the identification with the non-existent me, the non-existent plurality of phenomenal world has come to an end. So he has become a Bhikshu, a monk; he has no house anywhere. When the cosmos itself is a super imposition of human mind, when the so-called material objective plurality is an illusion, is unreal, where can the monk have the house? Even the body in which he lives is unreal. So he is *aniketa* – a Bhikshu, who lives by bhiksha.

Buddham sharanam gachchami. Sharanam gachchami is translated as surrrendering. To me the word talks about dedication, holistic dedication not surrender as an act of will but an action which is the result, the natural consequence of the urge of the whole being. When we say sharanam gachchami we are proclaiming unto ourselves dedication of the whole life. I have seen that the word of Buddha shines like a jewel in the splendor of truth, and therefore to the truth proclaimed by Him, I dedicate myself to.

Sangham sharanam gachchami. How does a Sangha, a brotherhood come into existence? When like-minded people, who have chosen the same path, and the same proclamation of truth, through the same vehicle of the person, take that pilgrimage together a Sangha comes about. It is beautiful,

Because they have chosen the same path, and have accepted the same truth, and are taking the pilgrimage together, their minds have become like an orchestra producing the same melody. Their minds are tuned together,

I have looked upon Gautam Buddha, Tathagata as a revolutionary of his times. To me he was a giant explorer in the realm of human consciousness He had wanted to find out the cause of suffering, the ways to eradicate the cause of suffering, the ways to eradicate the roots of suffering. Not to end suffering but to eradicate the roots of suffering and to open the gates of unconditional freedom for every human being – that is how I see Buddha through His teachings.

By coming here you have provided me with an opportunity to spend these few days with Buddha, I am with that consciousness.

In 1994 in Dalhousie Vimalaji wrote about the state of Nirvan.

The State Of Nirvan

The consciousness is overflowing with wholeness,
The substance of which is Nothingness,
A Nothingness which is enriched with Self-illumination

This state can be called Nirvana
Maybe even the state of Nirgranthata!

A river is water in the flowing state,
And Vimala means a consciousness self-illuminating

A river keeps flowing,
Vimala keeps living

A river enters and mingles with the sea
Vimal's life mingles and vanishes into Nothingness

A river enters the sea and becomes immortal
Vimal attains cosmic consciousness
while remaining detached from the body

A body-free consciousness
While still living in the body

A universal consciousness
expressing Truth, Intelligence, Limitlessness
While still wearing the cover of individuality

Jainism

In 1973 during "Paryushan" festival of the Jains, Vimalaji spoke of Shrimad Rajchandra's exposition of Jain doctrines. Rajchandra not only grasped Life's essence but actually lived by the doctrines; this enhanced the impact of what he said. He emphasized Lord Mahavir's exhortation not to be imprecise for a fraction of a moment in life and not to utter even one iota of untruth.

The founder of Jain Religion, Mahavira, all through his life emphasised one point: don't live in pramad; arrive at a state of your being, where there will be no pramad. The English speaking world is not yet acquainted with this beautiful, significant word pramad. The word "pramad" from Sanskrit, means inaccuracy in perception, inaccuracy in verbalisation of what has been seen and inaccuracy in reacting to the perception or audition. This three-fold inaccuracy is called Pramad, and Apramad Yoga means living in a state of your totality, where there will no inaccuracy in perception, verbalization or reaction. Lord Mahavira all through is life, used to insist that his followers and friends understand the beauty of living in Apramad.

Inaccuracy in perception takes place when the senses are not purified. Inaccuracy in verbalisation takes place when the mind is not in the state of attention. Inaccuracy in reaction is due to a desire to hide the motive, which has caused the distortion in perception. You never conceal it from others unless you try to conceal it from yourself. So the essence of Jain Yoga, Jina Yoga is not to be in Pramad even for a fraction of a second, and self realisation will come on its own way. Do not live in the state of Pramad, physically, verbally or mentally even for a second in any relationship whatsoever and what you call Kaivalyavastha, Nirgranthavashta, Nirvan will rush towards you with eager steps. The state of Apramad purifies, illumines and enriches life simultaneously.

So to be a Jain one has to learn and understand what is Yoga and be a Yogi. Jina is one who has won over the sense organs and with the help of the sense organs, the mind, the brain. One who understands the life of a Jina and lives that way is a Jain, the real Jain. That is to say the real Apramad Yogi. That is what Mahavira has taught.

In 1992 during the Paryushan Parva, Vimalaji wrote a poem for her Jain friends, Paryushan Parva is a period of eight days, kept aside for reflection every year by the Jain community. The period is observed year during the Hindu months of Shravan/Bhadar.

Paryushan Parva

This human body is only a morsel in the mouth of Time.
This human mind is just a toy in the hands of Time.
Whoever listens to the whims of the mind
becomes a prey to Time.
Whoever worships the demands of the body
comes under the influence of Time.

The Atman is beyond old age and death.
Time cannot touch it
Whoever can pass through death becomes Timeless.
Therefore remain rooted in the Atman
Giving up the whims of the mind.
By living as an Atmarthi
you can break the trap of Time.

The imaginations of the mind are bitter
but truth is not bitter.
If the touch of the Atman increases
Where will untruth enter from?

If there is no such thing as liberation
What then is there to achieve?

There is no 'Way' to liberation
The past, future and present
are all contained in the Timeless moment

Remaining ignorant about the true Self
Is itself the cause of bondage.
Is itself action leading to bondage.

The moment you make your eternal abode
in your pure being
Then you go beyond body and mind.

New Presentation Of Sant Gyaneshwar's Teachings

Vimalaji has been familiar with the teachings of Sant Gyaneshwar since childhood. The books written by Gyaneshwar are in ancient Marathi language.. Vimalaji introduced the teachings of Gyaneshwar Maharaj to the Hindi speaking world by giving numerous discourses in Hindi on his book Gyaneshwari – which are his commentaries on the Bhagavad-Gita. Vimalaji spoke on chapters two, nine, eleven, twelve and eighteen of the book Gyaneshwari, and the talks were published by Vimal Prakashan Trust. Vimalaji also translated Gyaneshwar Maharaj's book "Amritanubhav" from Marathi into Gujarati.

Synthesis of Science and Spirituality

Besides presenting the teachings of the ancient wisdom in terminology that the enquirers can understand, Vimalaji spoke about the modern discoveries of science and technology, and how they are an important development in human evolution and how besides having a scientific approach to spirituality, enquirers can learn a lot from the scientific discoveries and scientific attitudes.

Everlasting Flame

Besides camps for the non Indian enquirers, Yoga students and teachers, Vimalaji kept aside time for the Indian enquirers and social activists. When she was in Dalhousie there would be Satsang sessions for the local residents and enquirers who came from all over North India. The local resident knew Vimalaji right from her first visits to Dalhousie, even before she began staying at Shivkul..

The Satsang sessions were mostly in the evenings and no matter what the weather, even if it was pouring outside, the friends would make it a point to come. The Satsang sessions would begin with sitting in silence for thirty minutes and after that if there were any questions Vimalaji would answer them or the silence session would continue.

In Dalhousie, a friend from Gujarat, Laljibhai Vekaria, built a small extension to the main building and it is reserved especially for enquirers and social activists. Vimalaji feels that since the activists work hard throughout the year, it would be beneficial for them to have some rest and free time to review their work. So the opportunity is provided to them to stay in the Annex at Shivkul and interact with Vimalaji.

The activists would take the opportunity to share with Vimalaji the problems and challenges they encountered while doing the work and ask for guidance on future work. Many of them were young people who had attended the Youth camps and were inspired from the talks to go and settle in the villages and work for village upliftment, many of them were members of Gujarat Biradari and of Abhinav Bharat Foundation working in Gujarat.

Though the days in Dalhousie and Abu were spent in meeting with enquirers from many different countries, and social activists, time was also kept aside for silence. After Vimalaji stopped extensive traveling, she was able to live a quiet life, taking great joy in doing the small tasks of daily living. Even though she has to face the physical challenges of the long-term effects of accidents and illnesses, she is able to take delight in the daily rhythms of life and lives a fully active, productive life.

During this period of Vimalaji's life, many books were published based on her talks and written articles. She wrote many beautiful poems during this period giving us a glimpse of her inner life.

0The Nectar of Life

Unceasingly circulating in this very body
Is the Nectar of Life

From the Himgiri peaks of Samadhi
Flows eternally the spring of nectar
Bathed are the body, the mind, the pranas
Soaked through and through is Vimal
Drenched is the sight
Drenched is the speech and the words
Flowing through every moment
Is the nectar of friendliness
The nectar of life

The Cosmic Life

In spite of living in a body
How wondrous is the feeling of being one with the cosmos

Untouched by the sense of 'mine'
How wondrous is the realization of 'Aham Asmi"
The sense of 'I' is there, but the sense of 'you' does not arise

Has the cosmic consciousness taken possession of this body?
Or is it that the 'I consciousness'
has merged into the whole cosmos?
Whatever it is!

It has been a sacred happening.

The context of Dream – Yogic Sleep – Wakefulness
is woven into the cosmic life.
Neither the Seer nor the seen,
but pure witnessing is Cosmic.

Keeping alight the unfliickering flame of pure seeing
is the content of the essence of being alive.

Awareness is its bright light
Joy is its perfume
Ecstasy is its culmination
Light – Joy – Bliss

The death of the 'Me'
Has it not transformed this being into an immortal vessel?

The Sacred Dance

This is not just the universe
It is the song of the eternal

This is not an illusion
This is the manifested form of Brahman

From the Bindu has arisen the cosmos
And the endless sound eternal has arisen from the Pranav Om

The six seasons give us the six essences
Ever fresh and ever abundant

The great time keeper - the god of death gives the beats
Binding them into a garland of moments

The sacred dance of Shiva and Shakti
Spontaneously express itself in the life of Vimal.

A Life of Wholeness

As was said in the introduction, Vimalaji's life is the essence of wholeness. It is a wholeness that is only possible when understanding is lived immediately and permeates through all of life. The wholeness of Vimalaji's being is everlastingly in blossom and is forever spreading its glorious perfume.

Vimalaji has made extraordinary contributions to humanity by creating a revolutionary approach to spirituality, integrating social action and spirituality, empowering the role of women in society, developing blueprints for peace in countless countries, producing a body of literature that revitalizes ancient wisdom, correlating science with spirituality, and guiding the Sadhana of thousands of inquirers from most every land on the earth. She has done all this without hierarchical organizations, without scandals, without vast accumulations of wealth, and without assuming the status of an authority figure, a guru. Although remarkably accomplished, she presents herself simply as a friend sharing her understanding.

Vimalaji is tremendously capable and has made invaluable contributions to humanity, but it is the exquisite, elegant beauty of her presence, the pure radiance of an evolved spiritual being sweetly serving the people, the marvelous nectar of ecstasy pervading every aspect of her deeply peaceful life that is unparalleled in human history.

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Avadhoot of Arbudachal

Biography of Vimala Thakar

From the book

Avadhoot Are We !

We are
Avadhoot - Avadhoot
are we !
In a female body See for yourself !
Our Avadhooti is of by-gone centuries
It is even before the Rishis of the Vedas
We are Avadhoot - Avadhoot are we !

The Universe is contained in this body
Universal Mother is contained in our heart
We are Avadhoot - Avadhoot are we !

We are in the guise of an individual
but are in essence the pure universe
In a female body we are Narayan
We are
Avadhoot - Avadhoot
are we !

. . . Vimala